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# FUSION



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FUSION

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**FUSION**

Retro-gaming  
Publisher  
since 2006



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# FUSION

It's been a sad time in the world of Retrogaming with the recent passing of Oliver Frey. Whilst I never got the chance to meet him personally, his influence on my own life, as well as many of yours, was huge.

I ended up a little late to the CRASH party. It wasn't until I saw issue 8 in WH Smiths that I discovered what I was missing. What stuck out was a fantastic image of a diver jumping into what I thought was a swimming pool, but looking closer, I realised it was a ZX Spectrum.

From that point on, I loved CRASH; I still bought it when I moved over to owning a C64 - mainly because I wanted to enjoy the excitement of seeing a new cover each month. Time moved on, and with the slow decline of the 8-bit machines, I stopped buying the magazines; they had become a shadow of their former selves, with one exception. The cover art from Oli was still top-notch, painting vivid (and sometimes very gory) pictures based on a small set of pixels that poorly represented a spaceship or barbarian. We have lost an enormous talent, a wonderful person and a pioneer of the British gaming industry. From all of us here at FUSION, we send our deepest condolences to Oli's partner Roger Kean.

From the next issue, I'm passing the reins of FUSION over to Ben Honebone. Chris has big plans for the coming year, and we need time to put these into place, so it makes sense for Ben to take more of a hands-on role and edit FUSION. I wish him every success.

Enjoy the issue!



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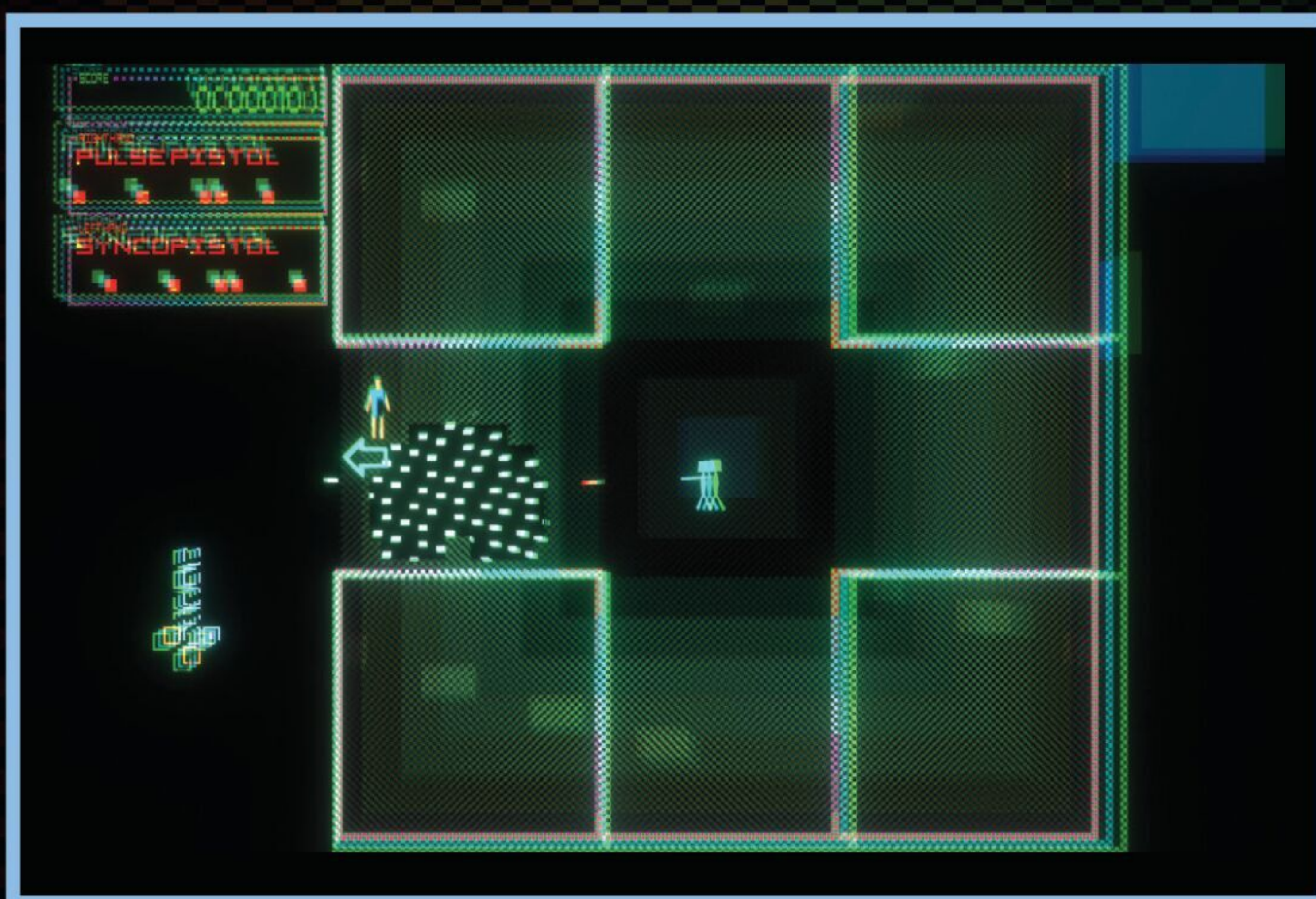
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# RAINBOW LASER DUNGEON



## ALAN HAMMERTON PUTS THE COLOURFUL TWIN-STICK SHOOTER FROM VECTOR HAT THROUGH ITS PACES

■ The year: 2084. Predictably, evil robots rule Earth. So evil, they have outlawed music and dancing is strictly forbidden. But, in the underground, the beat goes on.

**D**r Dysko aims to stop the machines' rule of terror with his new Rainbow Laser, but disaster strikes. The robots abduct him before he can complete his funky weapon. All you know is Dr Dysko is somewhere inside a dungeon filled with danger, so it's your job to bring the funk back by rescuing him.

*Rainbow Laser Disco Dungeon* is a twin-stick arcade shooter, very much in the style of *Robotron 2084*, albeit a lot more colourful and with an excellent soundtrack. Each dungeon is



created procedurally at the start of every game, so there is no knowing where Dr Dysko may be being held. The rescue attempt begins in a very plain room, with a number of exits on each of the walls, which lead to other rooms where your search will continue. Moving and firing are very simple to get to grips with; the left stick moves you around, and the right stick fires your weapon in the direction held.

As you move from room to room you will find

junctions and crossroads, usually guarded by at least a few robots. Some will head towards you, and some patrol set patterns. They all have a murderous hatred of you and won't hesitate to fire at you should they see you. Most rooms have a set challenge you must complete before the exits open; sometimes, it may be collecting a set number of keys or killing a certain number of robots. Your score is determined by how quickly you complete the challenge and how much



damage you take; beating a room without taking any hits can sometimes be a challenging task.

As you explore further into the dungeon, extra weapons such as the Spitfire, which does exactly what it says, and the Time Bomb can be found to help kill even more mad robots. Swapping between weapons is a simple click on the Left or Right shoulder buttons. Be careful, though; these extra weapons have a limited amount of ammo - holding the right firing stick too long will soon leave you with an empty gun,

usually at the worst time possible.

The weapons themselves are rather cool; the rate at which they fire is based on the tempo and beats of the game's soundtrack. The display on the left of the screen shows small squares under the gun you are using, which corresponds to the current song. Choosing the right music can influence your ability to mow your way through robots or dodge around them when a slower section of the song is playing.

As you might imagine, music is vital to



*Rainbow Laser Disco Dungeon*, and thankfully the playlist of twelve songs is excellent. A mix of different styles suits most tastes, adding to the game's ambience. As noted earlier, the music is not only crucial for how your weapons work, but other gameplay elements also function to the beat. This can make some rooms tricky, significantly if a track changes mid-room; the shifting block patterns you've learnt suddenly move to a new rhythm.

As you might imagine, the simple controls make the game very easy to play; fans of *Robotron 2084* and *Smash TV* will be right at home here. There can be some frustrating moments, but they don't feel unfair - especially as you start understanding how the game works. Difficulty options allow you to fine-tune the type of experience you wish to have - easy will enable you to just play, with no real penalty for death apart from losing your score. Increasing the difficulty changes how the game responds to your inevitable deaths, with the highest level treating death as you would expect; no second chances.

*Rainbow Laser Disco Dungeon* is a lovely throwback to old, hard-as-nails and simple arcade games from the early 80s but wrapped up in a gorgeous graphical style. I am slightly concerned that the graphics can be a little too flashy for some people's tastes. Those with photosensitive epilepsy can turn down the level of flashing and balance out the colours, but oddly you cannot do this on the main page - the option is buried in the options menu.

If you love pretty 8-bit style arcade twin-stick shooters and enjoy a thumping soundtrack in a game that won't hold your hands (unless you want it to), you will love *Rainbow Laser Disco Dungeon*. Now, if you will excuse me, I'm going to breakdance my way back to find Dr Dysko again.





# SUPER STAGES

Special

GEORGE STURGEON  
CHATS TO ONE OF  
THE GODFATHERS OF  
THE FIRST-PERSON  
SHOOTER ABOUT  
DESIGNING THE  
LEVELS FOR THE  
ORIGINAL *DOOM*



## Developer Interview Part 1

**Game:** DOOM  
**System:** PC  
**Year:** 1993  
**Developer:** ID Software  
**Managing Director:** John Romero



■ Previous issues of **FUSION** saw the launch of our Super Stages special features by getting the inside story from Michael John on the development of the *Spyro the Dragon* series. This glimpse of the world through the lens of Video Game Designers helps us appreciate the work that goes into developing the levels we love.

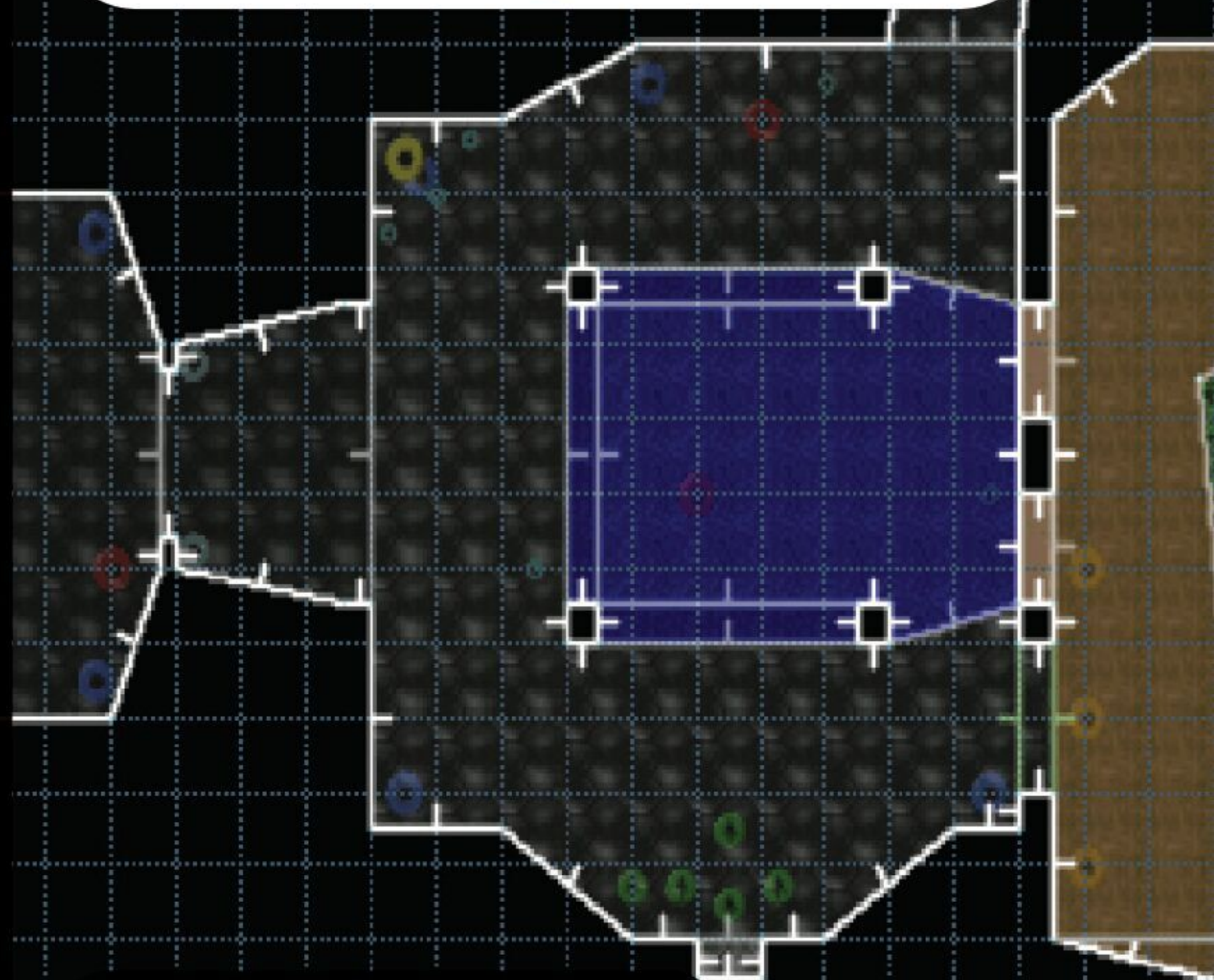
**F**or those unfamiliar with the *DOOM* franchise (have you forgotten your keycard again, Doomslayer?), it is a defining centre-piece of the First-Person Shooter genre, with run-and-gun gameplay gracing many a PC back in the 90s and many consoles after that. In this issue, we have been lucky enough to get a 'first-person perspective' on *DOOM* courtesy of Id Software's John Romero. John has kindly taken the time to share the details behind the making of this apocalyptic piece of gaming history.

**George Sturgeon:** What were the first steps towards designing levels for your game?

**John Romero:** Designing the function of the level, then designing the layout of the main path through it. Envisioning the look of the level at the start position is important for giving it an identity – it's what players will remember.

**GS:** From a player's perspective, my memory of certain games in my collection comes from signature levels that deliver a great start – a stamp of identity to tell players what's in store before they've even taken a step. A striking first impression is paramount for making a level memorable, whether through visuals that speak for the level's atmosphere, music that evokes a specific tone, or the selection of enemies you'll be facing. Are there any common pitfalls that you try to avoid when creating levels?

**JR:** Making a checklist of everything needed to consider the level completed helps avoid those.

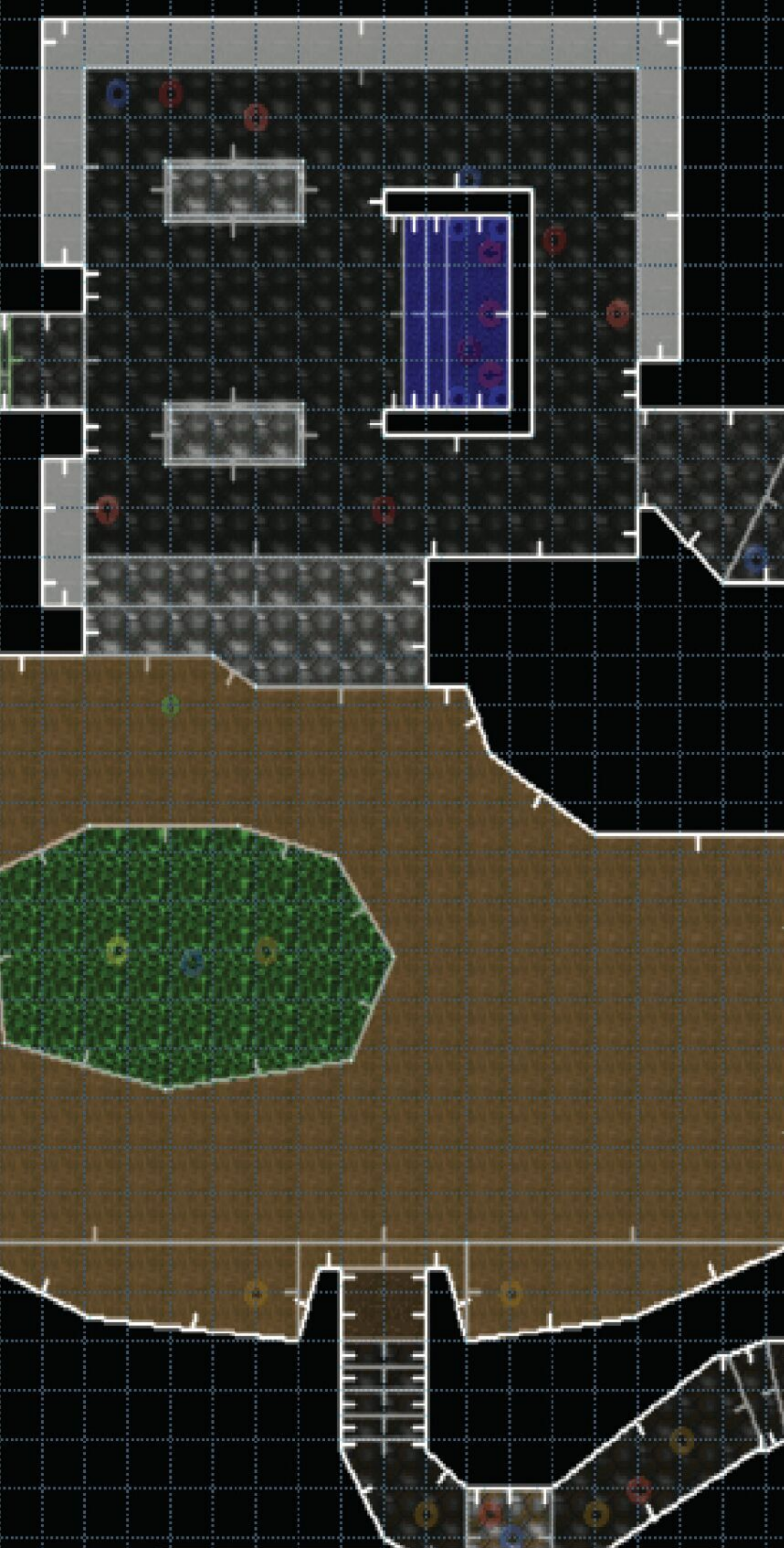


**Background:** Overhead map of E1M1.

**GS:** It sounds like developer experience and excellent planning are a must for minimising the potential pitfalls at the concept stage. From my own playthroughs of *DOOM*, I think the 'checklist' would have included exploring, finding hidden secrets, and gunning down many monsters to an awesome soundtrack. These certainly seem to be the recipe behind what makes *DOOM* the icon it has become for First-Person Shooters. What do you consider to be good practice when designing levels? Can you provide some examples of your methods?

**JR:** Providing a balance of exploration gameplay and combat that matches the game's tone. All my levels have plenty of





exploration between combat, and the player usually senses when it's going to be time to fight. So I sometimes surprise them.

**GS:** To me, this describes the aim to perfect the gaming experience. A clear balance between all of a game's elements without one feature overshadowing the other. Surprising the player at certain moments is a great technique to keep players engaged and on their toes, like a secret wall dropping with a horde of enemies and collectible items on top of it in *DOOM*'s E1M4: Command Control. Do you have a favourite part of the design process, and why does it stand out?

**JR:** I like being in the middle of making a level. The middle is the fun bit because you have established rules and ideas and are using them as you go. The beginning and end of creating a level are the hardest parts.

**GS:** Once the concept stage is complete and a level's design is underway, the developer can start to push the creative boundaries when shaping the mechanics of a stage and its core identity. It makes sense that the process that comes in the middle of designing a level would be the most enjoyable because it's a sort of creative journey for the designer where they can employ these established design rules. The players are taking on that same memorable journey through the level, although their experience will be a bit different as they see the culmination of all that hard





work. Which aspect of level design for the game proved the most difficult, and can you tell us why that is?

**JR:** Deciding how interactive the environment will be – establishing those rules. It's an extra important layer over everything; how the implementation determines how difficult it will be to put each interaction in place.

**GS:** This is one thing many players love, the ability to destroy a wall and discover new areas or being able to interact with everything you see. Unfortunately, there are games around today that still don't fully embrace this feature. Some early pioneering games were quite sparse in terms of content like this but clever in how they started to introduce interactivity between the player and the environment. In hindsight, they were extremely innovative for their time.

How did the game's key features influence you and your team's approach to level design during development?

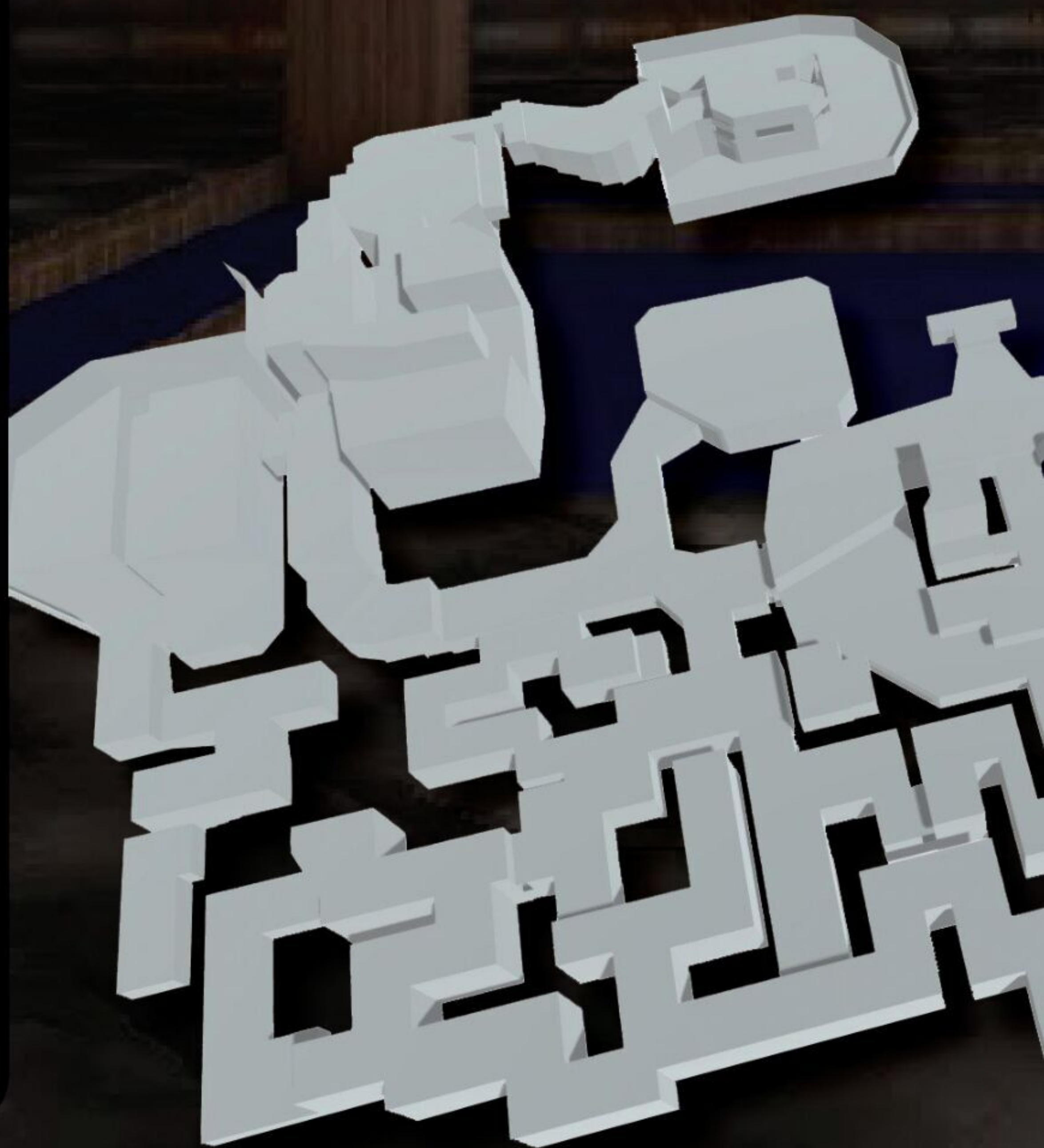
**JR:** When you know where in the game the level takes place, you can design the level to best take advantage of where the player is at weapon-wise, power-up-wise, etc. Elements of the design can dictate what you can do in the level at that point.

**GS:** If you've uncovered a powerful weapon such as the BFG9000 or Plasma Gun in one of *DOOM*'s levels, it's not by pure luck. There's often a reason for its inclusion. Whether as a reward or a sign of tough battles ahead, it's a well-thought-out process that balances the game. The Id Software team has fully considered the player's current weapons and level of learned skill, which can influence the developer's choice in stage design. Does one level come to mind that you hold above the rest as an example of a perfect stage?

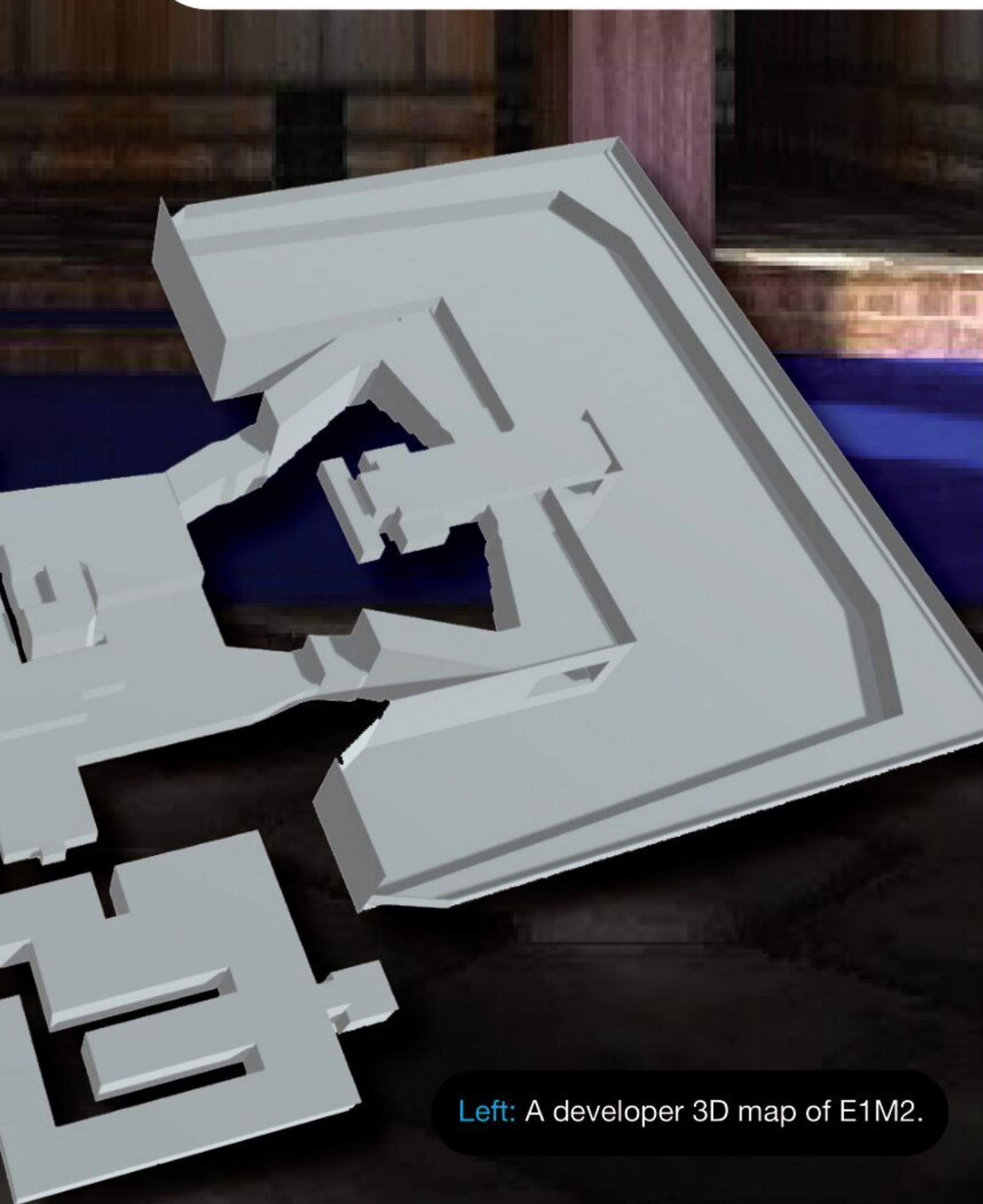
**JR:** I'd have to say the first level of *DOOM* had a really great balance of first-time player experience: the amount of time in the level was short, going up/down stairs to learn we have heights, opening the doors to progress, using

a weapon to defeat enemies, blowing up a barrel to see its effects, and finding secrets.

**GS:** Playing *DOOM* almost thirty years on, the game's commitment to secrets and interacting with the environment to get an advantage over the 'spawns of hell' is abundantly clear. As one of the last levels developed for the game, E1M1: Hangar is to *DOOM* what World 1-1 is to *Super Mario Bros* – a perfect showcase of what's ahead, and with an iconic tune. It is a masterful tutorial that is ingrained into our







Left: A developer 3D map of E1M2.

memory. What would you say is your favourite stage that you've designed and why?

**JR:** Probably SIGIL E5M7. It's a huge level with lots of challenges, surprises, and reveals.

**GS:** I just had to revisit this one and can see why this is one of John's favourites. Taking place after the original ending of *DOOM*, SIGIL E5M7 is a vast map with no shortage of secrets. Both SIGIL and this particular map showcase *DOOM*'s defining apocalyptic run-and-gun aesthetic.

The kill count will continue to rise in the next issue of FUSION as we discover what goes into creating a perfect *DOOM* level, and John also provides insight into some of the challenges faced during development. We also discuss the importance of *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Quake*, and lastly, we hear about the reactions from game testers in the concluding article of this Developer Special.



# FRANKIE

GOES TO  
HOLLYWOOD



RELAX AS GRAEME  
MASON LOOKS BACK  
AT DENTON DESIGNS'  
INNOVATIVE ARCADE  
ADVENTURE

ocean



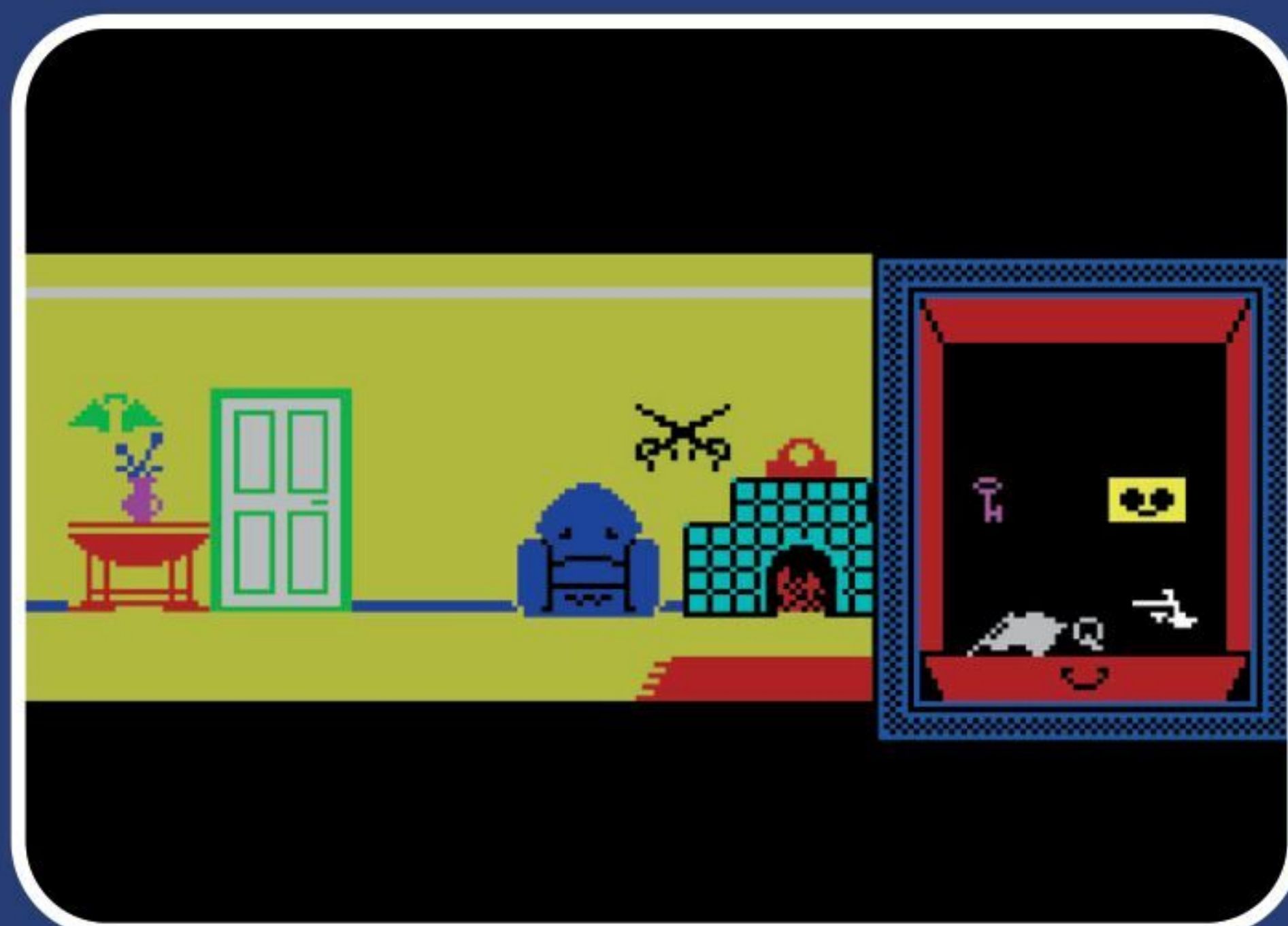


■ If anything can be said about the 8-bit software scene in the mid-Eighties, it was that it had its fair share of innovative titles. An early licence from Ocean Software, *Frankie Goes To Hollywood* takes the themes and ideas behind the legendary Liverpool band and successfully transposes them into a murder mystery game that represents not only the music, but also the mood and landscape of the Eighties. All within 48K.

The development of Ocean's game fell to Denton Designs, specifically coder John Gibson and graphic artist Ally Noble. A noble Liverpudlian herself, Noble felt an affinity with the band that counteracted Gibson's difficulty in working out how to adapt the music into a playable videogame. After many hours of brainstorming sessions, the team settled on a generic suburban setting, each location hiding a series of mini-games. Completion of these games helped the player character, an amorphous being inspired by the figure from the ZTT logo, become a real person. From shoot 'em-ups to puzzle games and downright weird experiences, all were inspired by the ethics and lyrics of Frankie Goes To Hollywood.

But it became apparent during development that it wasn't enough. Lacking a central concept to drive its narrative, the idea of a dead body and a mystery to solve became the hook upon which the rest of the game hung. If you wanted to become a 100% real person and finally enter the fabled Pleasuredome, you had to turn detective and work out who was the murderer.

Marvellously peculiar and compelling, Ocean commissioned a VHS-sized box for *Frankie Goes To Hollywood*, the plastic riser inside holding a second cassette which contained the band's biggest smash, Relax. It was a good tape to flip constantly in your hi-fi while playing this original and offbeat Speccy game.





# LET'S TALK RETRO



# GAMES FLASHBACK

## Nintendo GameCube - F

**YOU ASKED. THEY LISTENED. COLIN AND JAMES FROM LET'S TALK RETRO ARE BACK TO TAKE YOU ON A GAMES CHART FLASHBACK!**

### Colin:

**A**fter a break for a few issues, we're back to take a look at another games chart from our distant pasts. This time we're going back to when U2 topped the UK singles chart with "Sometimes You Can't Make It on Your Own", and Elvis sat in the number two spot with "Wooden Heart". If you visited your local cinema, you might have watched Ben Stiller in *Meet the Fockers* or Brad Pitt, George Clooney and Catherine Zeta-Jones in *Ocean's Twelve*. A certain Alan Sugar was looking for his first in a long line of apprentices as *The Apprentice* aired for the first time here in the UK on BBC2. If, from those snippets of information, you have managed to guess that we are talking about February 2005, then Congratulations! Because we are indeed going back to February 2005 and looking at the top five games topping the Nintendo GameCube chart. First up at five James, we have Namco's *Tales of Symphonia*.

### James:

**Y**es, and Role-playing action gaming fans got excited by *Tales of Symphonia*. Published by the unstoppable Namco and released towards the end of 2004, the game was still selling well four months on. This title is part of the *Tales* franchise and the fifth instalment that started with *Tales of Phantasia* on the Famicom. The story is in-depth and revolves around two parallel worlds. As the story moves forward, you discover that changes in one world affect the other. The game was ported to the PS2, and in later years, a sequel called *Dawn of the New World* was released on the Wii. Both the sequel and ToS later received a combined HD release on the PS3 which featured numerous additions and changes. PC owners didn't miss out either with a Steam release in 2016.

### Colin:

**A**t four, we find our old friend Donkey Kong in Namco's rhythm game *Donkey Konga*. The game's story revolves around Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong finding a mysterious object resembling two barrels on the beach. On showing the mysterious object to Cranky Kong, he explains that what they have found is a set of





# HART RACK

February 2005



**Above:** Performing in front of an audience has taken its toll on Mario, while a Koopa looks on in vengeful satisfaction.

Bongos. Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong eventually decide to practice the Bongos in an attempt to become famous musicians to earn lots of money so that they can buy as many bananas as they can eat. As a result, you get to play what is, in my opinion, a slightly above-average rhythm game that stops being much fun reasonably quickly. The tunes you get to play along to are OK, with versions of such recognisable songs as Louie Louie, We Will Rock You and Losing My Religion, along with many tunes taken from other Nintendo games. The most notable thing about the game, though, is that it can be played either with the GameCube controller or a unique controller made especially for the game called the DK Bongos that resembles, unsurprisingly, a small set of Bongo Drums.

## James:

**N**ext at three, 'It's a Me, Paper Mario' (said no one ever) *The Thousand-Year Door*. Many will know this is the sequel to the N64 title, *Paper Mario*, created by the same studio that delivered such classics as *Fire Emblem* and *Super Metroid*. Remember *Super Mario RPG* on the SNES? This takes elements from that, but it's far more fun if you ask me. Have I said how amazing the graphical design is yet? Oh, baby, this game looks amazing, even today. It's a perfect mix of *Mario* and RPG elements. The story is told as you play and is typical of many *Mario* games. I just love how there are various and very different partners joining Mario throughout the story, which keeps things interesting. During battles, you are watched by an Audience, and if you do well, they will cheer, which is super



## GAMES CHART FLASHBACK

NINTENDO GAMECUBE - FEBRUARY 2005

1. Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
2. Need for Speed Underground 2
3. Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door
4. Donkey Konga
5. Tales of Symphonia



satisfying and gives a well-received boost to your Star Meter. If, like me, you often find yourself getting a bit stuck in RPGs, for a few coins, you can buy a little hint that will get you back on the right path. Why can't all RPGs do that? The puzzles are clever, not too taxing, and fun to solve. If you own a Switch and are a super fan of this, feel free to check out *Paper Mario: The Origami King*. Just don't tell anyone I mentioned it as it's nowhere near as good. I am surprised this didn't get a remaster. Come on Big N!

### Colin:

In the number two spot, we have *Need for Speed: Underground II*, the direct sequel to *Need for Speed: Underground* and the eighth instalment in the *Need for Speed* Series. The most notable thing about the game is that it's the first game in the series to be open world, allowing you to freely drive around exploring the city and unlocking new areas by winning races. Circuit Race, Sprint Race, Drifting and Drag Race modes were all carried over from *Need for Speed Underground*, while four new modes in Street X, Under Ground Racing League, Special Events and Outruns were added. At the time of



Above: Coming in at No. 1 and still looking great in 2022.

release, the game was regarded by many as the best game in the series with great gameplay, almost endless customisation and, of course, the newly added open-world element. However, this GameCube version was unfortunately often criticised for its unstable frame rate and inferior graphics to the PC, PS2 and Xbox versions.

### James:

Drum Roll, please... The number one GC title from Feb 2005 was *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*. Developer Retro Studios, based in Austin, Texas, was tasked with making a sequel to the runaway success of *Metroid Prime*, which was released roughly three years earlier. The gameplay was tweaked to be more immersive and provide a new screw attack and wall jumping. A four-player multiplayer mode was also included. If you like arguing with internet strangers (and who doesn't, right?), some argue this is an FPS, but I'd say it's just an adventure game with First-person perceptive elements. *Echoes* was very well reviewed by all the top mags and websites of the time. Eurogamer scored it an excellent 9/10. Fast forward to 2009, and Wii owners that may have missed this could get blasting but obviously not in FPS fashion (Yeah, I said it!).

### Colin:

Well, that brings us to the end of another Games Chart Flashback that hopefully contained many gaming memories for us all along the way. I don't know about James, but I'm off to practice my DK Bongos. Join us again next month when we will be taking a look at another chart from yesteryear, but what will be the system, the month and the year?

## TOP TIP



Even when you run out of Light/Dark Beam ammo, you can still use it. Set your gun to Light/Dark Beam (when you've run out of Light/Dark Beam ammo), Charge it (with Charge Beam) and release. It will be a regular Light/Dark Beam shot, not a charged one, even though you have no ammo. This can be done infinitely.





THIS YEAR'S ARCADE HIT WITH REAL MOTION GRAPHICS

# POLE POSITION



RETRO FAITH SLIDES INTO  
HIGH GEAR TO BRING  
FUSION A BRIEF HISTORY  
OF THE FIRST REAL MOTION  
RACING VIDEO GAME



Way back in the mid-70s, arcade gaming was in its infancy. Most racing games were simple electro-mechanical games that only allowed players to move left and right while avoiding other vehicles. During this time, Namco was developing arcade cabinets and released *F-1*, the world's first Formula 1 game. The 1976 racer is nothing more than a footnote in gaming history, but it set Namco on a road that would lead to one of the most influential games ever made.



Above: Nine seconds left on the clock to reach... NANCO?!



Above: The stand up version of the *Pole Position* arcade cabinet.

Gaming technology started to evolve quickly as the 80s loomed, and Namco hit the big time with *Galaxian*. The arcade smash was one of the first games to use full RGB colour graphics. Its designer, Kazunori Sawano, started work on a new racing game that he showed to Shinichiro Okamoto, who liked the idea. The pair joined up with Sho Osugi, who had designed *F-1* a few years earlier. *F-1* would be the basis for their new game.

The three designers wanted to create something different from the racing games before, so they decided to replicate the Fuji Speedway as

the track. They worked on the game for three years and used all the expertise they had built up with the electro-mechanical games from the 70s. As development continued, they experimented with new processors that would provide the power to shift the perspective from top-down to behind the car.

On its release in September 1982, *Pole Position* became an instant arcade hit and was the highest-grossing game of 1982 and 1983 across the globe. It was released as a sit-down and upright cabinet and sold over 21,000 units in the US alone. Game reviewers at the time were blown away by the graphics and felt that gaming had entered a new era of realism. Before *Pole Position*, most racers had a top-down perspective or, as in the case of Sega's *Turbo*, a pseudo-3D look. But now, arcade-racing fans could get behind the action, see every turn and be in the







Above: The Pepsi logo on the trackside hoarding.



Above: KA-BOOM! Whoops...there goes the Pepsi logo!

Right: Namco's impressive F-1 arcade machine circa 1976.

driving seat.

The impact that *Pole Position* had on games cannot be understated. It was a revolution and paved the way for games to enter a new era. The size of the vehicle on the screen was another new feature. It feels enormous when compared to other graphics from the time. You can see details like the car tyres and the angles of the bumpers. The new perspective also added a sense of speed that could not be replicated when playing with a top-down view.

*Pole Position* is also notable for some of the first examples of product placement in a video game. Actual companies, such as Marlboro and Pepsi, paid to have their product logo on the advertising hoardings that you whizz past on the

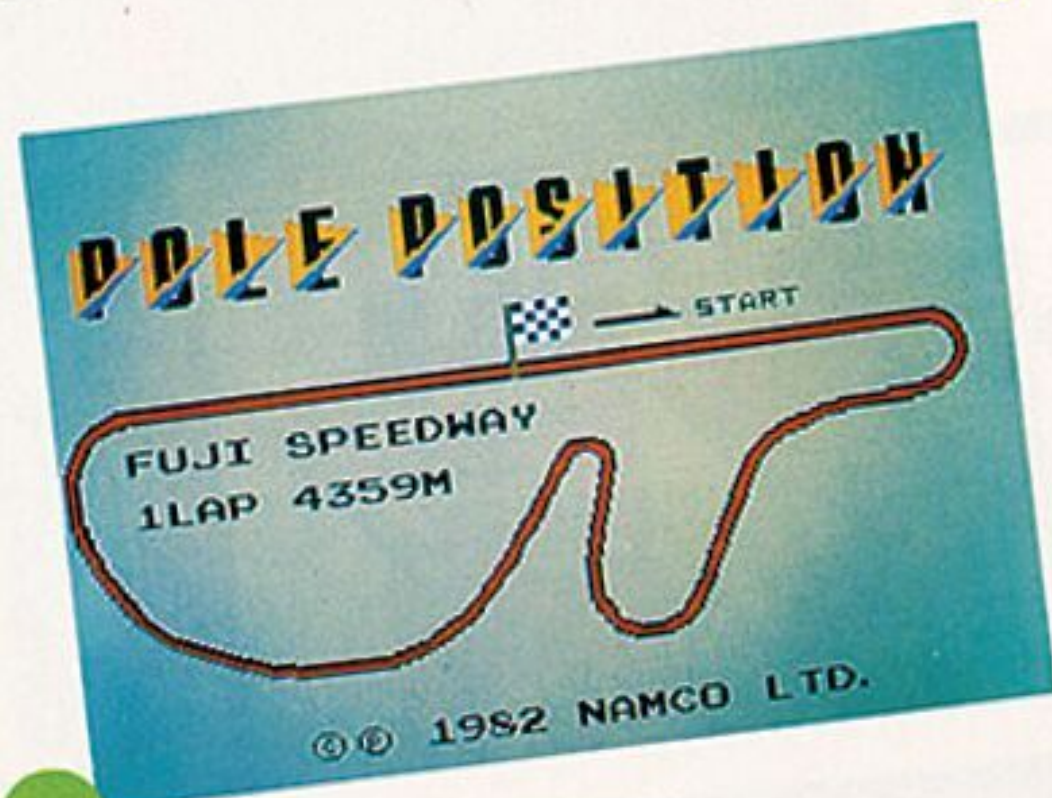
track. The game quickly became a household name, and DIC Enterprises licensed the name for a cartoon series that ran for thirteen episodes in 1984. While the show had little to do with the game itself, the fact it was the source for a Saturday morning cartoon showed just how popular *Pole Position* had become.

Parker Brothers, famous for family tabletop games, also licensed the name for a new board game released in 1983. In the board game, players draw cards that determine how many squares their car moves around the track until one finds the finish line. The increased revenue



# POLE POSITION

**namco**



## "GRAND PRIX" QUALIFICATION RUN

To qualify for the "GRAND PRIX", the driver must pass a preliminary run within the time limit (Operator-Adjustable). The driver's time will determine his starting position and the shorter his lap time the higher the bonus points he will be awarded.

## EXCITEMENT

The handling and control of a finely tuned engine, well-balanced machine, the aura of speed, the roar of engines, the feel of power behind the wheel, the excitement of driving is "POLE POSITION"!!!

## PERFORMANCE

Using the quick response of "POLE POSI-

TION'S" Acceleration Power, Braking Power, Steering Power, etc., gives the player the chance to test his steel nerves against incredible odds... high speed driving, skidding, weaving in and out... to reach the finish line... THAT'S PERFORMANCE!!!

## THE FEELING OF A "3D-SCREEN"

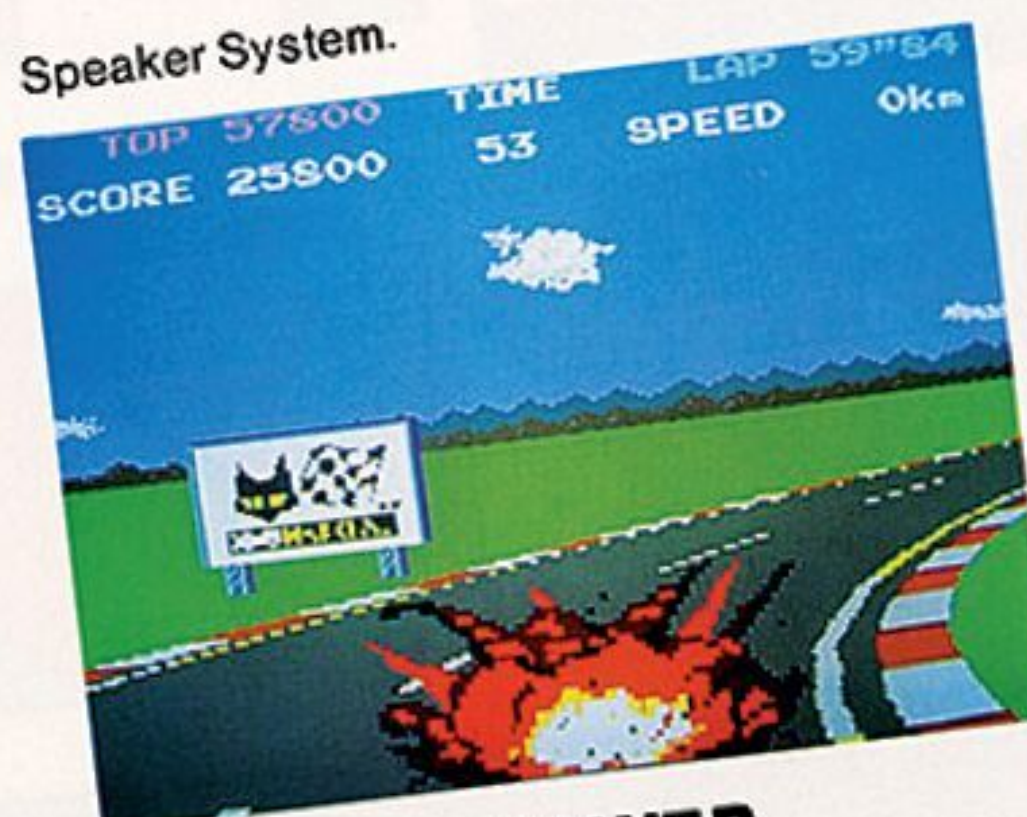
Going at the speed of 300 kph, curves pop up at incredible speed, cars and objects seem to appear out of nowhere. "POLE POSITION'S" computerized image in perspective gives the player the feeling he is there, at the race track!



## 4-Channel Speaker System

The roar of the Engines revving up, passing, speeding, slowing, tires skidding enveloping the player through a 4-Channel

## Speaker System.



## BRAKING POWER

Brakes - HANDLE WITH CARE!!!

## EXTENDED PLAY

Extended play is awarded for going once around the track. Four laps around signals the CHECKERED FLAG... FINISH LINE!!!

## SPECIFICATIONS

•Power Consumption: 130 W •Game Fee: Operator Adjustable •Dimensions: Length 730 mm/Width 1,750 mm/Height 1,565 mm (excluding signboard) •Weight: 170 kg (Front Cabinet 100 kg, Back Cabinet 70 kg) •Monitor: 20 inch Color

## BONUS POINTS

At the end of the game, Bonus Points will be calculated as follows:  
Passing Bonus... 50 pts x the No. of cars passed.  
Remaining Time... 200 pts x (Ending time - Remaining Time)



## "POLE POSITION'S" HALL OF FAME

The top 300 scores will appear on the screen, and the best 100 drivers can record their initials. Then the 6 "PRO-DRIVER'S" scores and initials will appear on the screen.

**NAMCO LIMITED**

Above: Namco's 1982 advertisement flyer for the Pole Position arcade machine.

# PREPARE TO QUALIFY

from these licensing deals enabled Atari, the publishers in the US, to get a TV spot on MTV that showcased the game and introduced it to audiences beyond the arcade. *Pole Position* transcended its video game roots and became an 80s icon alongside *Pac-Man*, *Super Mario Bros*, and *Space Invaders*.

With the massive success of the arcade cabinet worldwide, it was inevitable that Namco would want to port the game to home consoles. Almost all platforms, including the Atari 2600 and Vectrex, had a version of *Pole Position*. While many of the 8-bit computer ports were not received well, mainly down to poor scrolling, the console versions fared better. Several ports were praised

for keeping the same perspective as the arcade original, which helped with the sense of speed that made it so appealing.

*Pole Position* would see a sequel released in 1982 that added two new tracks and more detailed graphics. Namco's *Final Lap* succeeded the series and had a brand new arcade board designed along with the name change. And while it would never again reach the heights of the first game, its impact on gaming has never been forgotten. The risks Namco took to use new and expensive 16-bit processors and persevere with the long development time gave us one of the best arcade racers.





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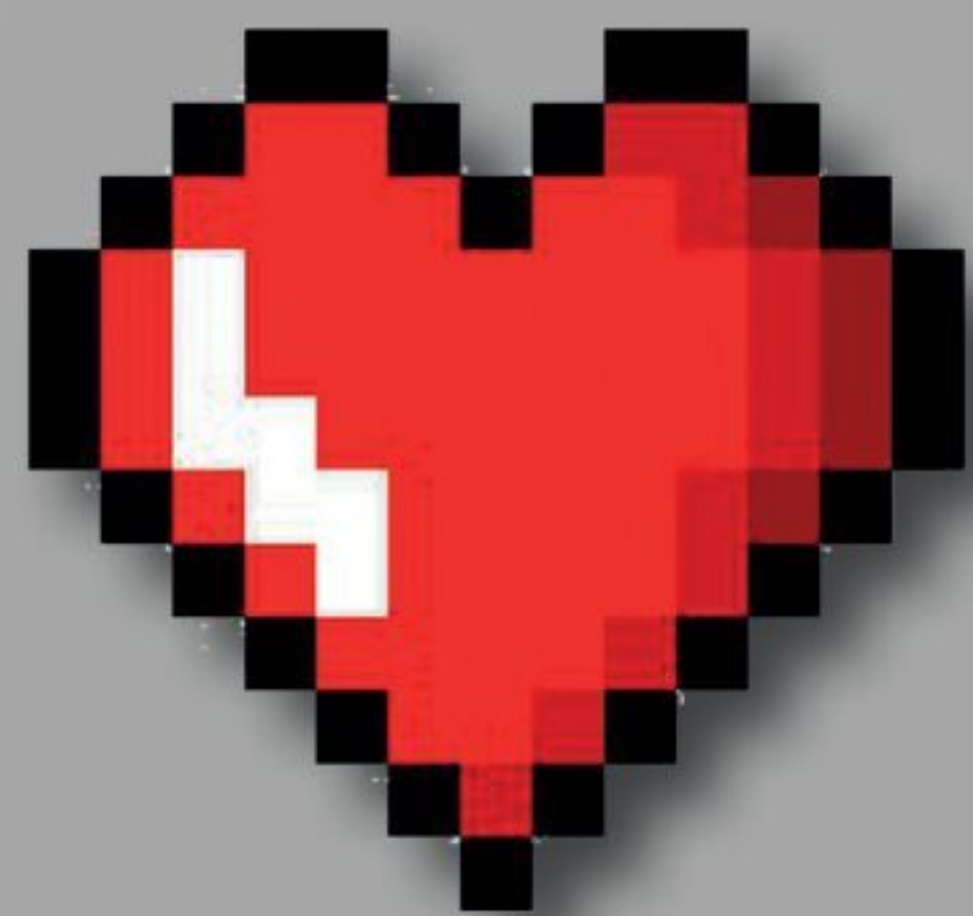
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# FUSION



**Game** : Crude Buster / Two Crude  
**Year** : 1990  
**System** : Arcade  
**Words** : Paul Twist

One of my favourites from when the arcade ruled the roost is Data East's *Crude Buster*, 1990's pseudo-sequel to *Bad Dudes Vs. DragonNinja*, released in the west under the name *Two Crude*.

I first encountered it in its *Crude Buster* guise in the back of a shop, where two arcade cabs with regularly rotated games stood. Friends and I would save lunch money and sneak out of

school at lunchtime for an illicit game on these machines, and the game that made the biggest impression on me was *Crude Buster*. I longed for a home version, but at the time, I owned a SNES and Amiga 500,

and *Crude Buster* only made it onto the Mega-Drive, released in the west under the very 90s title 'Two Crude Dudes.'

Fast forward 30 years, and a search on the Nintendo eShop led to me discovering it was available for the Switch. One of my gaming holy grails is available for download for pennies.

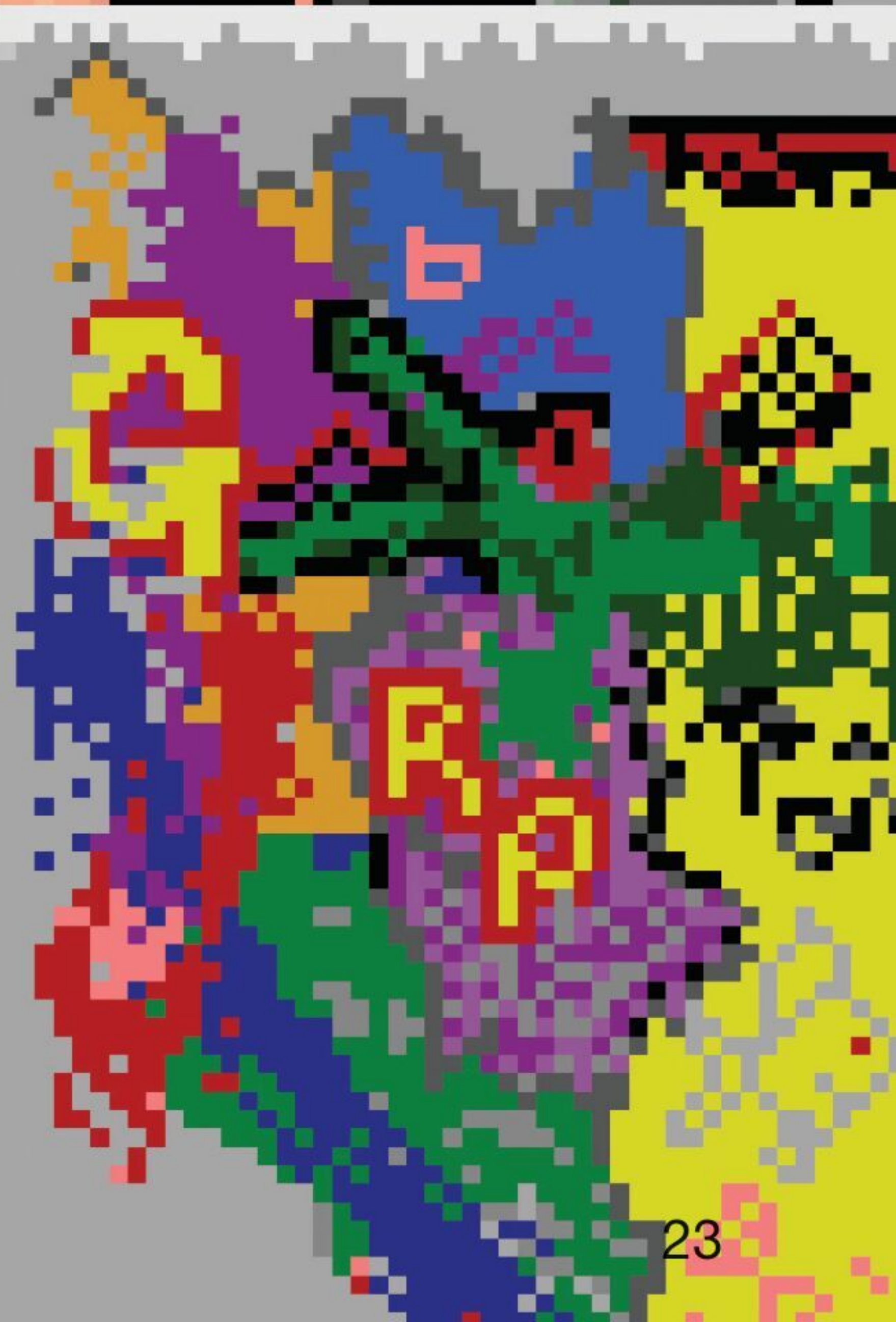
Why does FUSION love *Crude Buster*? Well, the chunky, well-animated cartoony sprites and comic-book-style visualisations of sound effects





such as “Krak!” help. The game looked amazing by 1990 standards, but it wasn’t just good-looking, as it seemed impossibly smooth to play at the time. The ability to pick up and throw enemies and huge chunks of scenery (including cars and billboards) felt like a step forward for the genre in 1990. It was a step beyond the games my friends and I had played previously, such as *Crude Busters*’ predecessor *Bad Dudes Vs. DragonNinja*, or perennial favourite *Double Dragon*. While not unique, the game’s use of digitised speech was still something of a novelty in 1990, with the characters’ memorable exclamation of “What a day!” upon being hit adding to the game’s charm.

It’s still playable today, even if by 2022 standards, it’s a little sluggish compared to more modern titles. While starting to show its age, we still love *Crude Buster*, and it’s an absolute must for any side-scrolling beat ‘em-up fan.





Bench

0%  
CLEANED

REVIEW POWER WASH SIMULATOR XBOX, PC (REVIEWED)

# POWER WASH<sup>®</sup>

## SIMULATOR

### ANDREW FISHER'S TO-DO LIST INCLUDES WRITING A WITTY REVIEW OF THIS FASCINATING GAME

■ Early Access and Game Pass are the perfect ways to explore a title like this, letting you know if it is for you. The hype has been building since the initial version arrived in 2021, and now with the full release, there is a real buzz around this game by Futurlab, published through Square Enix Collective.

**B**ack in the 1980s, there were famous games about jobs. The likes of *Paperboy* and *Trashman* took mundane occupations and turned them into challenging games. That spirit is alive here. You have set up a cleaning business in the town of Muckingham, which is in a dire mess. But first, you need to clean up your van. This serves as the first level of Career Mode and a tutorial on key controls.

As you aim your power washer at parts of the vehicle, you will see the material it is made of. This allows you to choose a relevant cleaning liquid or stick with the multi-purpose liquid good for everything. Next, you'll need to decide which nozzle to use, with the angle determining the strength and spread of the water you spray. You can also rotate your nozzle (oo-err, missus) vertically or horizontally. You can use extra equipment, in this case, the step stool, to help you reach the roof by picking it up and placing it.

There are shortcuts to help you, including showing the remaining dirt as an orange



Above: Your first job is to clean your own van. It will all come out in the (power) wash [Hic! - Ed].







Above: The aftermath of another heavy night, the back garden is filthy, from the garden chairs to the lawnmower [Hic! - Ed].

“glow” to guide you. Completing a section – such as a window, door, or wing mirror – earns cash. Opening your tablet, you can see a list of the remaining sections, their worth, and the percentage cleaned so far. A running total of the level’s percentage is always visible. Two players in online co-op can also play Career Mode.

As you tidy up more of the level, you earn Stars and money. Messages arrive on your tablet, informing you of new tasks and available levels as you reach specific Star targets. You are not forced to stay on one level in Career Mode, letting you return to mop

up more. Or, you can wait until everything is shining and you have the full five Stars. Helpfully, the game shows an extra in-game list of what is left to do when you get down to the last few items. The short “video” of the level being completed is very satisfying. Free Play lets you return to any open level, with up to six players in co-op. Challenge Mode forces you to complete a level in a specific time or using limited water. Finally, there are four Special jobs with unique tasks that can be hosted in co-op mode once started; these include the Mars Rover, a miniature golf course, a steam locomotive, and the Gnome Fountain.

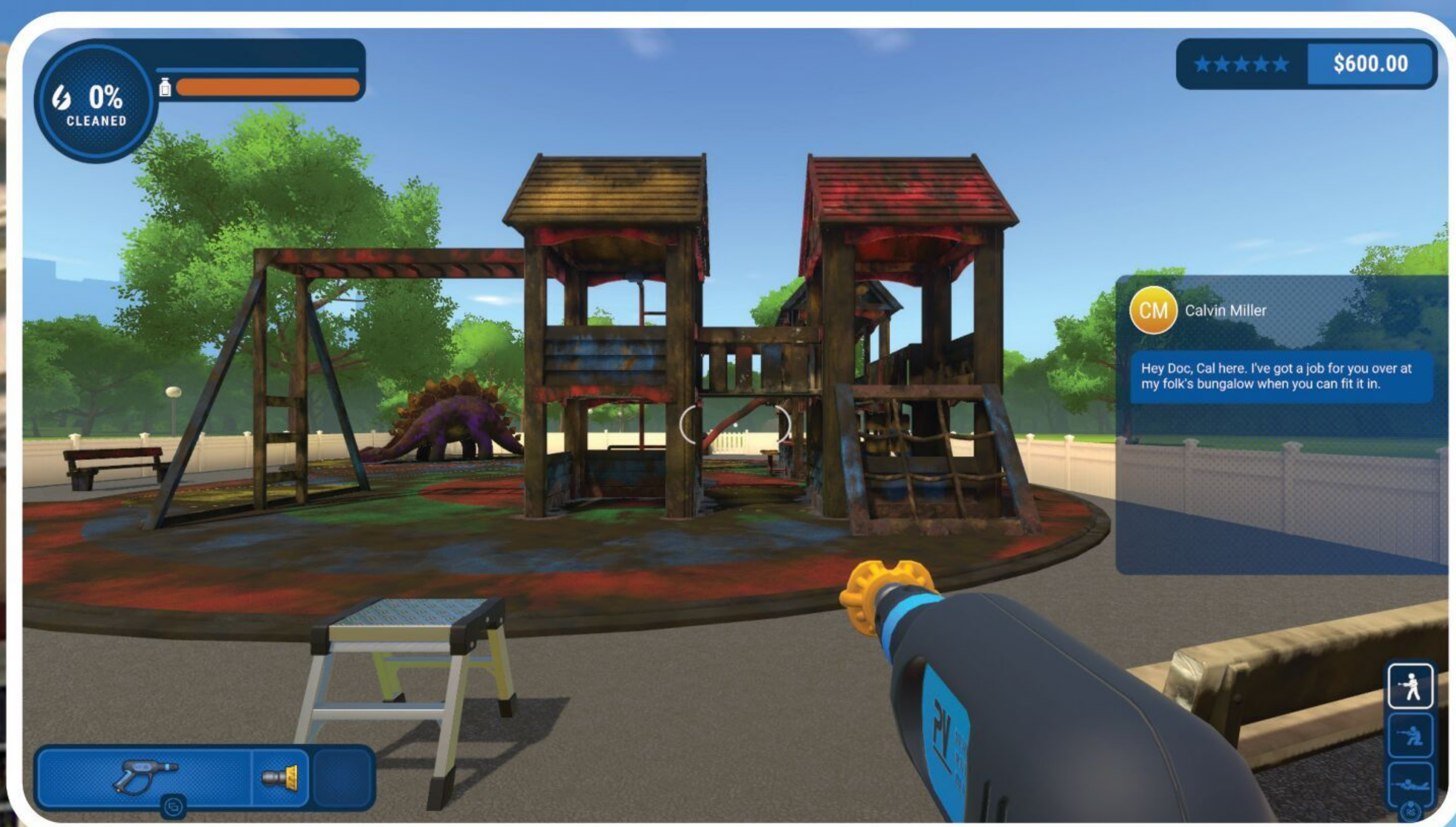
Gnomes are a recurring item across all the levels.

Extra equipment is also unlocked and purchased with the money you earn from Career Mode. Clothing includes different gloves, new nozzles, extensions (that one will raise the editor’s eyebrow), and cleaning liquids are also there to buy. Earning enough cash will allow you to buy stronger power washers, making the job easier.



Above: Progress is shown in this tablet view, allowing you to target specific parts to clean.





**Above:** From the cute Stegoslide to the loose football, there are so many fun things to do in the playground.

This sort of game is perfect for streamers and speedrunners. For example, you could use the stool to help you reach the van's roof – or jump up on the bonnet instead. It is worth noting that you need to be thorough and methodical; most objects will require you to clean under and on top of them, moving and changing your stance to blast them with water from every angle. There are Achievements for those that like to hunt them, from the obvious ones for earning Stars to hidden tasks that add fun to the levels.

Interestingly, there is no way to “fail” in Career Mode. You can keep blasting away with water until you have something clean; the only cost is your time. The Challenge

Mode does up the stakes, or you can mess around with the mess in Free Play. The whole idea was borne out of power washing videos on YouTube (who knew that was a thing?) and quickly made into a prototype. The refinement and development through Early Access have turned it into something almost unique. *Power Wash Simulator* is ideal for the compulsive gamer who must find and do everything on a level. It even gives you the checklist. The visual feedback of the level gradually becoming clean is also very satisfying, accompanied by the “ping” of the sound effects. With twenty locations and eighteen vehicles to make pristine, there is plenty of longevity. I became hyper-focussed and lost track of time while playing, which is an honest recommendation.

If you want all-out action, this is not the game for you. Some have even questioned if it really is a game at all. If you want something to switch off at the end of a tough day and just relax with, then ironically, a game about working as a cleaner is an excellent choice. Get down and dirty with this one.



**Above:** The movie sequence showing the Mars Rover being completed; the Mystery Hatch is hard to find...





RETROGAMING

# PC Engine LT



THERE ARE RARE CONSOLES AND THEN THERE ARE TRULY RARE CONSOLES. JOHNNY BLANCHARD TAKES A LOOKS AT THE PC ENGINE LT, A SYSTEM THAT MOST PEOPLE WILL HAVE NEVER HEARD OF.



■ Suppose you haven't heard of the PC Engine or Turbografx (as it was known in the US and the limited other countries it was released in outside of Japan). In that case, you're missing out on one of the genuinely great consoles from the 80s, including a massive library of top games, especially when you factor in the Japanese library, and some fascinating hardware makes this a must-have for collectors.

Despite being beaten in sales by Nintendo and Sega worldwide, the PCR held its own in Japan, holding the number two position in the console charts for most of the 16-bit era. All of this came from a console based on an improved version of the classic 8-bit 6502 processor.

But one of the even more exciting facets of the console was the sheer number of models trotted out by NEC. At least 17 variations were released over its lifetime, including CD models, versions integrated with other systems (including the Sharp X1

Twin that we covered in Fusion issue 23), different designs of the home console and portable systems.

For this RetroObscura, we will look somewhere in the middle of home consoles and portable systems. The PC Engine LT is a clamshell console, a mash-up of the original small Japanese PC Engine and a high-quality screen (for the time at least). You're probably thinking that this sounds like a wonderful little portable device. And you would be spot on. It is very portable, small, lightweight and the screen isn't top-heavy, so the internal controller is very usable.

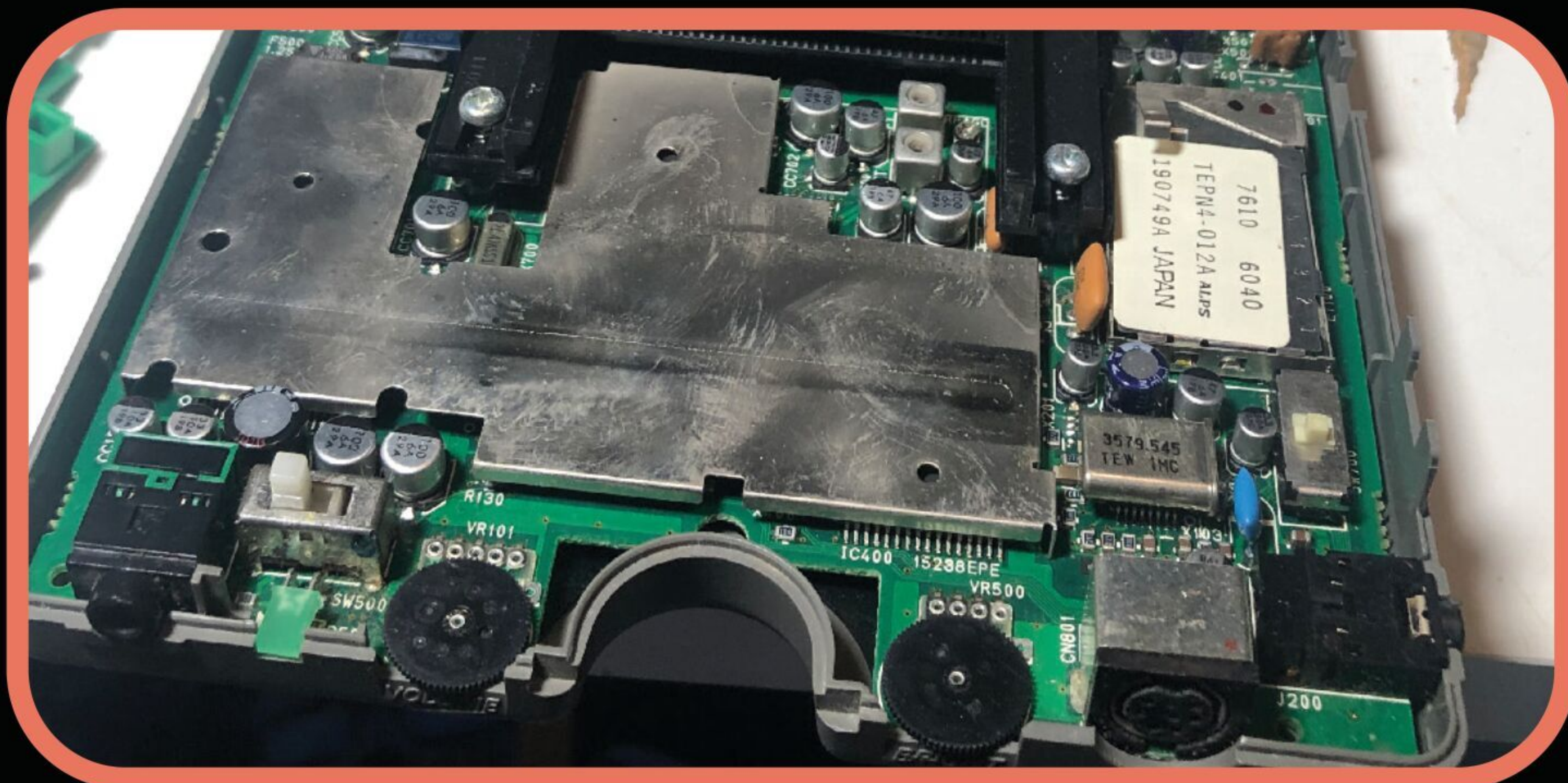
Indeed it's a surprisingly pleasant way to play games and, in fact, is my main testing machine when I get new ones through the post because it's so convenient to use on the sofa. There's one other good reason why my sofa is a good place to use it, it's because there is a power outlet nearby.

Despite being marketed as a portable system, it still needs a power cable connected for the LT to work.

There's no internal







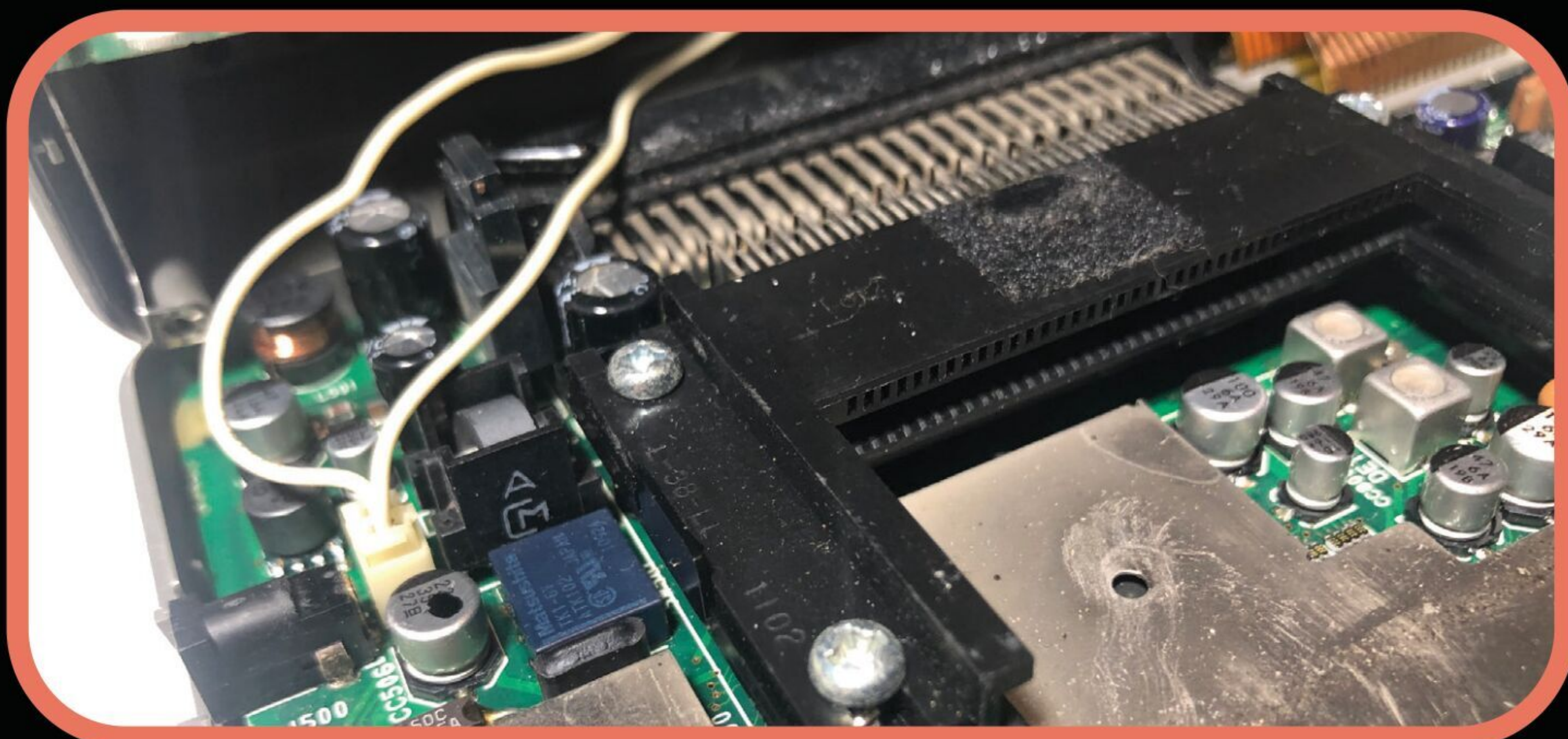
battery compartment to power it on the go. This is an even more brutal reality than the actual portable PC Engine, the GT, which has a proper battery compartment. The LT is nicer to use and has a far better screen than the GT; in fact, it's vastly better. It's even possible to use some of the add-ons with the LT, including the CDRom systems, which is not possible with the GT.

This might sound pretty insane, but it starts to make a lot more sense when you consider the market that NEC was designing for. Part of this is because of one of the features of the LT that I haven't mentioned. On the back, there's an extendable aerial. This allows the little console to be used as a television, picking up analogue transmissions. Whilst it was possible to buy an

after-market TV tuner for the GT, it really pushed the overall price up - to the point where the LT made more sense to buy due to the larger (and better) screen.

This was an important consideration for the average household in Japan when it was released. Houses in Japan tended to be relatively small, and having multiple TVs at that time was rare. The LT design meant that the owner could walk to another room and use it as their own television, or play games without taking over the main TV set that the rest of the family used.

So whilst it wasn't cheap, it cost ¥99,800 when launched (¥108,861 today, or £712.00); in the context of being a games machine and a second TV, it made slightly more sense.





# WHAT'S WORTH PLAYING?



## Outrun

I don't think I need to explain what *Outrun* is to the kind of crowd that buys FUSION. Suffice to say that in my opinion, the PC Engine version is very probably the best version from the 16-bit era. Great sound, really nice graphics and a good sense of speed.



## Alien Crush

I'm not a huge fan of pinball games, especially video ones, but there is something gripping about Naxat's PC Engine outings. Whilst slightly overshadowed by its successor, *Devil Crash* (*Devil's Crush*), I'm drawn to the more simple mechanics of *Alien Crush*. Playing any of the Naxat games will be a bunch of fun.



## Afterburner II

Another game that probably needs no introduction. Once again, the NEC Avenue team has produced a fantastic conversion with great graphics, sound and it all runs at a near arcade speed.



## Gekisha Boy

This game will not be for everyone; it has bizarre humour and some punishing levels later on. That said, it's a fun and challenging game. Think of it as a sort of *Pokemon Snap* for a slightly more adult audience.





At least, that was NEC's belief, which the lack of sales would suggest was incorrect. The LT is exceptionally rare now because of the scarcity of units shipped.

Getting into the idea of owning one, well, there are a lot of factors. I'm incredibly biased because the PC Engine is, hands down, my favourite console of all time. It's the system that started my collection all those years ago. Because of this, I find it hard to ever suggest that buying any or all of them might be a bad idea somehow.

With that said, the LT is incredibly rare. Like many old systems, it suffers from leaking capacitors which, because they're surface mount, is non-trivial to fix. Hence they regularly sell for over £1000 when they come to auction. It's a beautiful little device, the screen is good for its age, and the integrated controller works really well. Obviously, with analogue signals being turned off in Japan, the TV side is largely pointless now, so you'd just be buying it for the PC Engine part.

And that's where the LT gets its final nail in the coffin - there are far cheaper ways to get into the world of the PC Engine. A decent clip-on screen is available for the original CoreGrafx

consoles that will give you a similar experience; you just need to add a controller.

Despite all this, the PC Engine LT is a beautiful device and a fantastic part of a rabid collector's hoard. Still, there are better ways to get into the PC Engine with fewer of the downsides of the LT, including availability, price, and reliability.

However, if it's a choice between the LT and GT (the actual PC Engine handheld), the LT wins hands-down. It has the same reliability issues, and similar pricing. Both use the same games as the PC Engine home console, but the LT's far better screen and ability to use add-ons and an external pad push it over the edge.

As a side-note here, as usual, I've chosen some games to show what is worth playing. This was, by far, the hardest selection to make of any machine I've covered yet. I love so many games on the PC Engine, and, as I mentioned earlier, the LT can use all of them, so finding just four was very difficult.



See more of Johnny's incredible collection of retro systems at [www.youtube.com/c/ReEnthused](http://www.youtube.com/c/ReEnthused)





# MAKING A NERD VEST



## DID YOU HAVE ONE? TOY POLLOI DID. THIS MONTH WE ARE MAKING A BRAND NEW ONE

■ Some people may call this a Battle Jacket or Battle Vest, but I am calling mine a Nerd Vest as it seems to fit my outlook a lot better. I'm not fighting anyone, I'm showing off my hobbies and interests for all to see.

First up, what is a Battle Jacket? I first became away of them in my teenage years as a young fan of Heavy Metal, they were a mainstay of the scene. Fans would wear a cut-off denim jacket covered in band badges, sew on patches, studs, and hand-painted art over the top of a leather jacket. It was a way of showing your allegiance to the bands you followed, and also a great way to start up conversations with other fans. Mine was covered with only a few of my favourite bands of the time because I didn't have much money, so getting one or two patches was all I could afford.

## Making My Nerd Vest

Having seen a friend's vest recently, I decided I wanted to make something that suited my hobbies and interests now, covering it in badges and patches linked to the toys and TV shows that are close to my heart. I still like Heavy Metal, but toys take up a much larger part of my life.

I didn't have an old denim jacket to start with, so I had to go out and buy one. After a quick trip to the local Levi's shop, I came back with a rather nice trucker style denim jacket and immediately cut the sleeves off, much to Mrs. TP's shock. Why on earth would I spend a lot of money on a new jacket and then cut the sleeves off? In time she would understand.

I've been collecting badges and patches for a long time, not with any purpose, I just liked the look of them and would stick them on my noticeboard. When the time came to look at them, I realised I had quite a few to get me started. I'd also bought quite a few packs of Star Wars themed patches on a trip to Japan a few years back that were still in their packets. Along with







## Origins of the Battle Vest

**T**he origins of the Battle vest go back to the U.S. Army Air Corps, where pilots would collect patches and insignia and use them to adorn their regulation bomber jackets. These jackets were a way for the airman to show off their missions and were often painted with pin-up girls and cartoon characters.

After their military service, many pilots got into motorcycling and this seems to have transferred the patch-covered jackets into the biker culture, before moving into Punk and Heavy Metal subcultures.

Punks tend to prefer cut-off jackets made of leather, whereas Metalheads go for the denim cut-off jacket.



**FUSION  
FACTOID**



those I'd picked up myself, I also had a small selection of patches that I had been sent by fans of my YouTube channel, a few from the Star Wars 501st group, some cool designs from Moko-yo based on M.A.S.K. characters, and some odd vintage ones from my friend Lawrence and Toy Planet UK.

However, you can never have too many so after an hour of browsing on eBay and buying a few more, I had enough to get started. I even picked up a personalised 'Dave' name badge to go above the pocket in an American gas station attendant style.

Most of the newer badges I had were supposed to be iron-on, which I thought would be a great help and save me a lot of sewing time. Sadly this didn't turn out to be the case as the iron-on part just didn't live up to my expectations. They very rarely stuck onto the denim with any sort of strength, and if they were odd-shaped patches with bits sticking out, then they wouldn't stick at all. So, it was time to get the needle and threads out and sew each patch on individually. I had a rough idea of where I wanted them all to go, but I also changed my mind as I went along, making adjustments as each new patch was added.

It took me a week to get the first round of patches and badges attached, and the vest looked great. I loved wearing it and it became my go-to jacket. At toy fairs, it was a great way for people to spot me, and also a great way for people to start up a conversation.

The vest is going to be ever evolving as I find more badges and patches to add, and I

am trying to be picky about what goes on it as I don't want it to become overfilled.

## Getting Spotted

The very first time I wore my new Nerd Vest out in the real world, I had two young people come up to me and comment on how cool it was. For a forty-something, not very fashionable man, that was quite a shock. OK, I do have to admit that one of these admirers did follow the sentence "Wow your jacket is really cool", with the line "My Dad would love that", but, you have to take your compliments where you can!

## Nerd Vest v2.0

The enjoyment I have had making the first Nerd vest, and the small pile of badges and patches I had left over means I have now started a second one. I am having just as much fun working on this, I find the process of picking what goes where and then sewing them in place engrossing. If you spot me wearing either vest out and about, come and say hello.



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# FUSION





# FUSION



# MUSICAL MARVELS

**Musical Marvel:** Trigger  
(Giovanna's Theme)

**Game:** Guilty Gear Strive

**System:** PS4, PS5, PC

**Composer:** Naoki Hashimoto

**Release Year:** 2021



**Listen Link:**

<https://bit.ly/3PLeq3Z>





## BEN HONEBONE TRAVELS TO THE 22ND CENTURY AND THE WORLD OF THE GEARS TO FIND A MUSICAL MARVEL

Developer Arc System Works took the fighting game scene by storm in 2021 with *Guilty Gear Strive*, the long-awaited next chapter in the *Guilty Gear* series. It features an anime visual aesthetic, distinct character design, a grandiose combat system, and a sprawling multi-genre

soundtrack composed by Naoki Hashimoto. Each character in the game has its own theme tune. For this Musical Marvel, we will focus on Giovanna's theme - Trigger.

Giovanna is a grounded, wise-cracking officer in a special operations unit tasked with protecting the President of the USA. Fighting with her spirit wolf, Rei, she fires derogatory comments at her opponents before, during, and after fights. Trigger is the perfect musical expression of this character; a hard rock song full of attitude, aggression, and undeniable groove. The lyrics echo Giovanna's personality with the chorus hook, "Eye to eye, don't be fake, keep it real," and the explosive bridge section, "Trigger! Don't be curious about me; I don't want you to get hurt."

### SOUND DESIGN



Trigger begins with a funky, distorted bass line and a reverb-laden drum kit. It wastes no time throwing us into its catchy groove with stabbing guitar riffs and a loose, rapping vocal line that compliments Giovanna's fast-paced, "rushdown" combat style. The chorus hits with big open chords, and the vocal line switches to a throaty singing style that's full of attitude.

When we reach Trigger's bridge section, we are well into the second or third round of the fight. Tensions are rising, and this section's aggressiveness perfectly fits the battle's mood as the vocal shouts, "Trigger! With the brutish impulse, watch out, keep your hands up, don't make a victim out of me!"

### CONCLUSION



On a soundtrack full of high-octane rock and metal songs, Trigger stands out with its distinctly 90s sound. Trigger is a musical marvel because it is a stunning example of enhancing a character's personality and presence with music, while also creating an earworm that will be stuck in your head for weeks.



# Remembering

# OLIVER FREY



## *The FUSION team share their memories of Oliver Frey*



**S**o many memories are evoked by the brilliant artwork of the late Oli Frey. The covers of CRASH, ZZAP! and AMTIX were adorned with masterpieces created quickly and effortlessly with the airbrush. In the early days of the Newsfield magazines, Oli

worked directly on the layout boards, adding his distinctive Olibugs and other creatures into the margins. His eye for the macabre was given free rein for the pages of FEAR. And most of all, the memorable reviewer portraits in ZZAP! helped give the magazine personality and emphasise the opinions of what became the most trusted C64 review magazine. The software label Thalamus benefited from Oli's art, starting with the fantastic logo and then

through several legendary box covers.

Oli was born in Switzerland and moved to England to attend film school. He met Roger Kean there, and their partnership remained a constant in their lives. With brother Franco, Oli and Roger set up Newsfield in the town of Ludlow, a place that has become a pilgrimage for retro gaming fans. In recent years those fans have met Oli at retro events, where he remained humble but appreciative. He had a kind heart and a warm smile, and it was a pleasure to know him.

FUSION is intertwined with and inspired by the memory of Oli's work, from the covers by Trevor Storey to the articles Roger penned on how Oli created those classic Newsfield pieces. Here, the writers give their opinions on Oli's greatest work and share their love for him. Rest in peace, Oli.

**Andrew Fisher**





I met Oli purely by accident. Of course, I have been a fan of his work since the 80s, having been an avid reader of CRASH magazine, the best magazine to give reviews and articles on my beloved ZX Spectrum. The covers of each issue were brilliantly good, and I often had to explain to my mum that CRASH was a gaming magazine.

After finally befriending Roger Kean some 15 years ago (he answered the phone one day when I rang Thalamus Publishing with a query), I did not realise Oli was his partner. As I have joked with Roger over the years, I got two for the price of one. I had the pleasure of knowing and working with Oli for over a decade and persuaded him to produce new covers for the CRASH and ZZAP! Annuals old school with his old airbrush. He had so much more to give - yet again, I have lost a good friend to the big C. I am pretty sure he will have his airbrush out wherever he is now, creating a brand new masterpiece of epic afterlife proportions. I miss you, Oli.

**Chris Wilkins**

Before I got an Amstrad CPC 464 for Christmas and discovered video games, films and comics were my obsessions. I was still a little young to understand the quality of the writing in some things, so most of my choices were based on how it looked, sounded, or in the case of comics, how much I liked the artwork. Artists like Simon Bisley (2000AD), HR Giger (Alien), and Geoff Senior (Transformers) were (and still are) heroes to me.

One of my heroes didn't illustrate any of my favourite comics or design the concept art for any of my favourite films. This man drew the cover artwork for a computer magazine, something I hadn't learned about yet but was about to. I didn't care that I didn't fully understand the contents; I bought the magazine anyway. The cover of CRASH was enchanting. It was an assault on my imagination, sitting somewhere between the comic artists I knew and something else more cinematic, mysterious, and adult.

When I think of Oliver Frey, I am transported to another world full of possibilities and a young boy's dreams captivated by the strange and the fantastic.

**Ben Honebone**





I was living in my hometown of Ludlow and working in a shop. One day, a gentleman left his bank card behind. As I absently turned the card over in my hand, I spotted the name at the bottom- Oliver Frey. Despite being born one year before the last issue of the iconic CRASH magazine was published, I instantly knew that name.

As a kid, my mind had been blown by his *Street Fighter II* artwork for a Merlin sticker album. The graphics of the *Street Fighter II* arcade game were always colourful and appealing, but Oli's artwork brought the characters to life in ways that pixels never could. One picture of E. Honda crushing Guile's ribs (causing spittle to fly from Guile's mouth as he grimaced in pain) almost felt like still frames from a brawl caught on tape instead of artwork!

After reuniting Oli with his bank card, I ended up chatting with him and Roger Kean (whilst fighting back a Wayne's World-esque utterance of "I'm not worthy!" in their presence) and nearly a decade later, I'd have the absolute honour of contributing to some of the CRASH Annuals (with cover art obviously done by the legendary Mr Frey). I still haven't quite gotten my head around this fact.

Oli's art is many things - dangerous, imaginative, sexy and exciting, but the man behind the art always seemed so down-to-earth, a quiet, sweet, gentle and utterly decent soul. He will be truly missed.

Ryan Coleman





**ZAPA!**  
**AMIGA**

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# SNK 40th ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

WORDS BY RETRO FAITH

■ It may have been out for a few years, but I have just got my hands on SNK's collection of 80s arcade goodies. Most gamers will know the legendary publisher from its excellent *The King of Fighters* series, but SNK had a rich arcade history long before that game was released. This collection has 24 games, most from the arcade, with a sprinkling of console ports. The games range from *Ozma Wars*, SNK's first game, to *Crystalis*, a 1990 adventure title for the NES. Covering all the games would be a considerable undertaking, so I've picked some of my favourites to showcase SNK's arcade heritage before the mighty Neo Geo arrived.

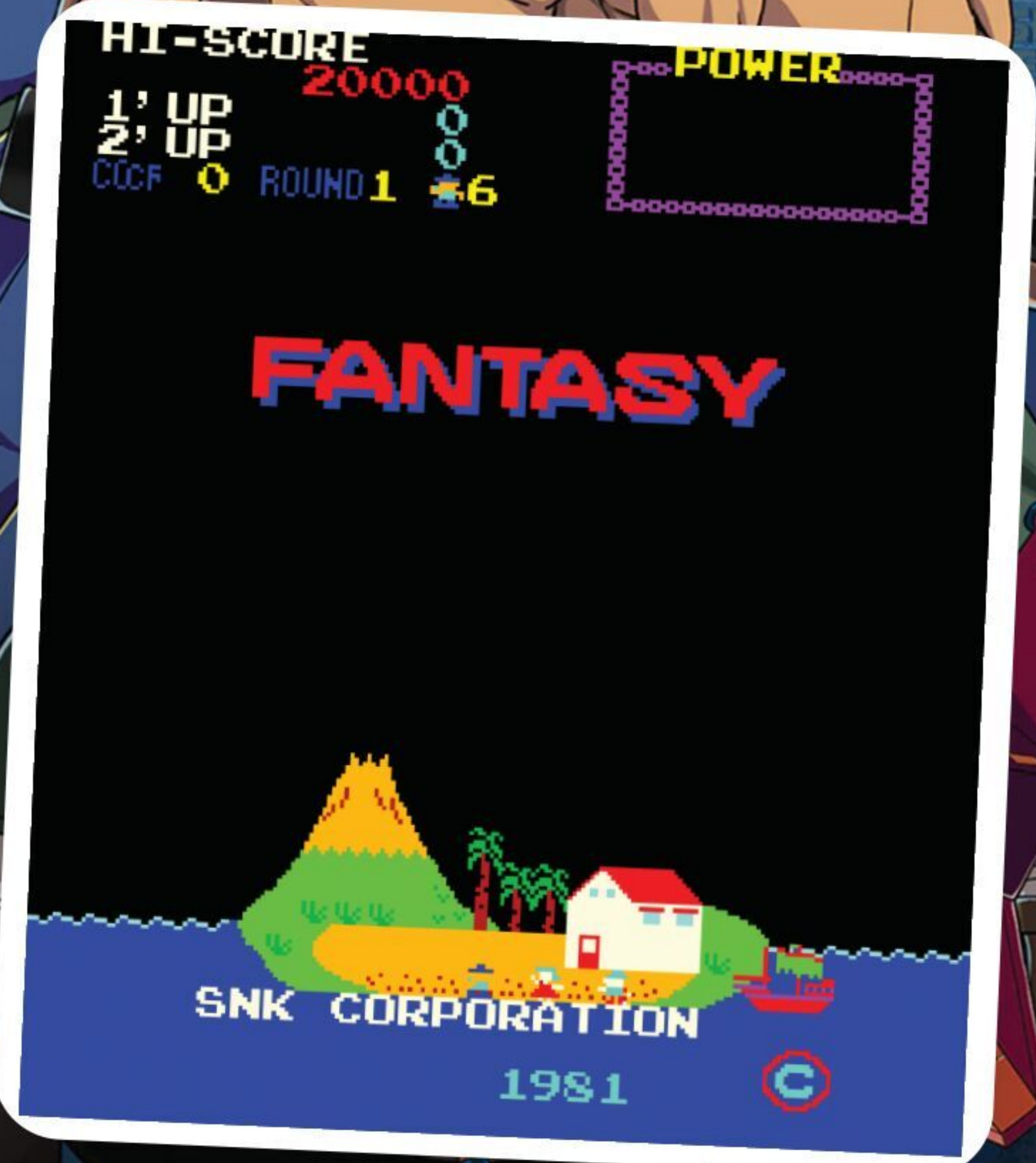
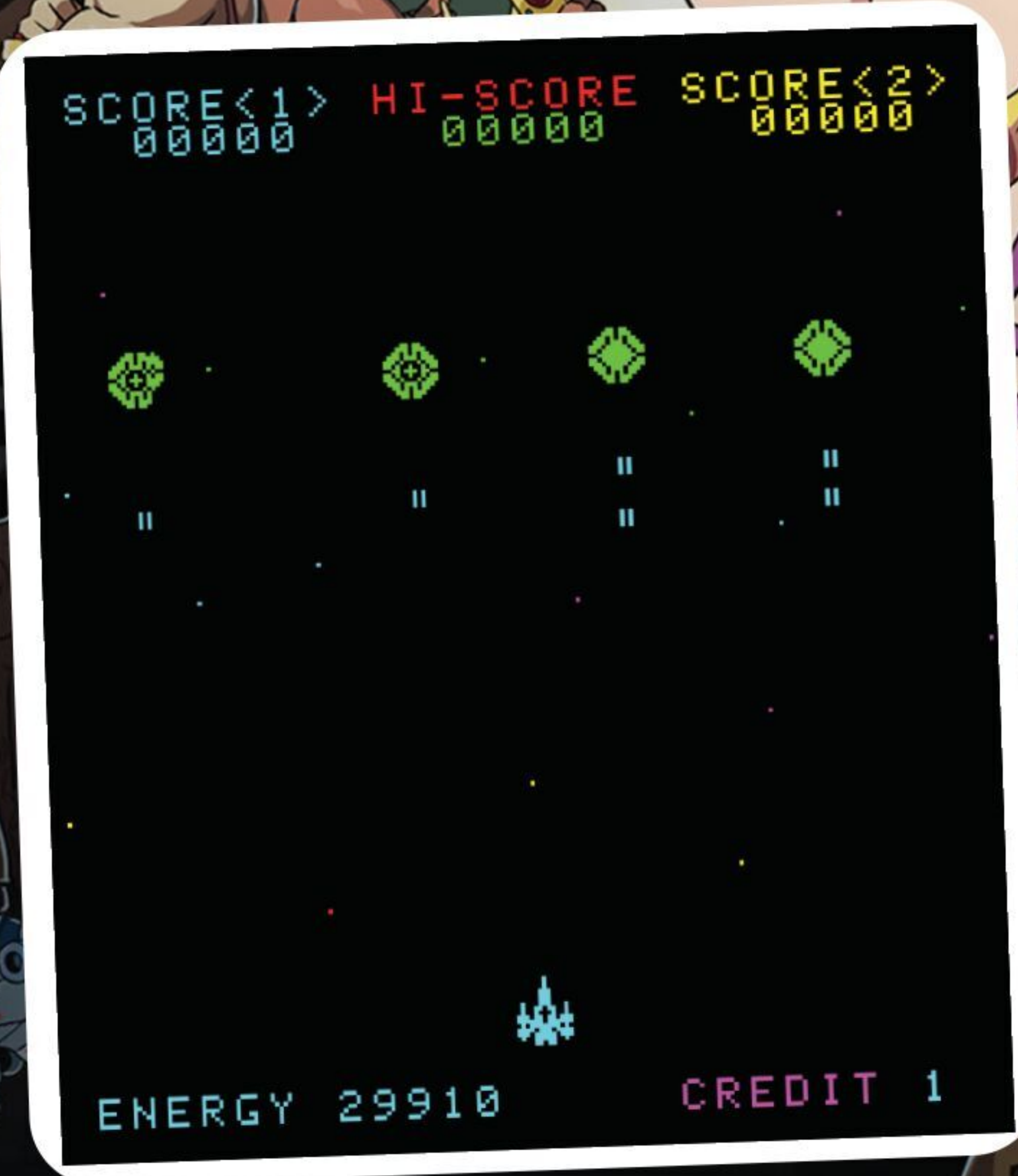
## OZMA WARS

SNK's first arcade game was a fixed shooter in the same vein as *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian*. The background does scroll to create a sense of movement, but your craft is limited to moving left and right at the bottom of the screen. *Ozma Wars* has an interesting gameplay mechanic, replacing individual lives with an energy bar, which means you can keep a game going for a long time. A mothership periodically appears to replenish your energy bar before the enemy waves start again. Top arcade-blasting action, solid controls, and unique features mean that *Ozma Wars* can stand alongside its more famous shoot 'em-up contemporaries.

## FANTASY

*Fantasy* is an action game and a curiosity, as it is the first arcade game to use a 'continue' feature. The objective is to rescue your girlfriend from a succession of situations that all play out differently. It feels like an early party game with many mini-games that combine to make one larger adventure. Some mini-games involve guiding your hot air balloon to safety, before heading to a single screen to fight monsters and avoid cannons. The controls are awkward, even by 1981 standards, and many deaths you suffer will seem unfair. Not SNK's finest hour, but a fascinating insight into the pains of early arcade gaming.







## ALPHA MISSION

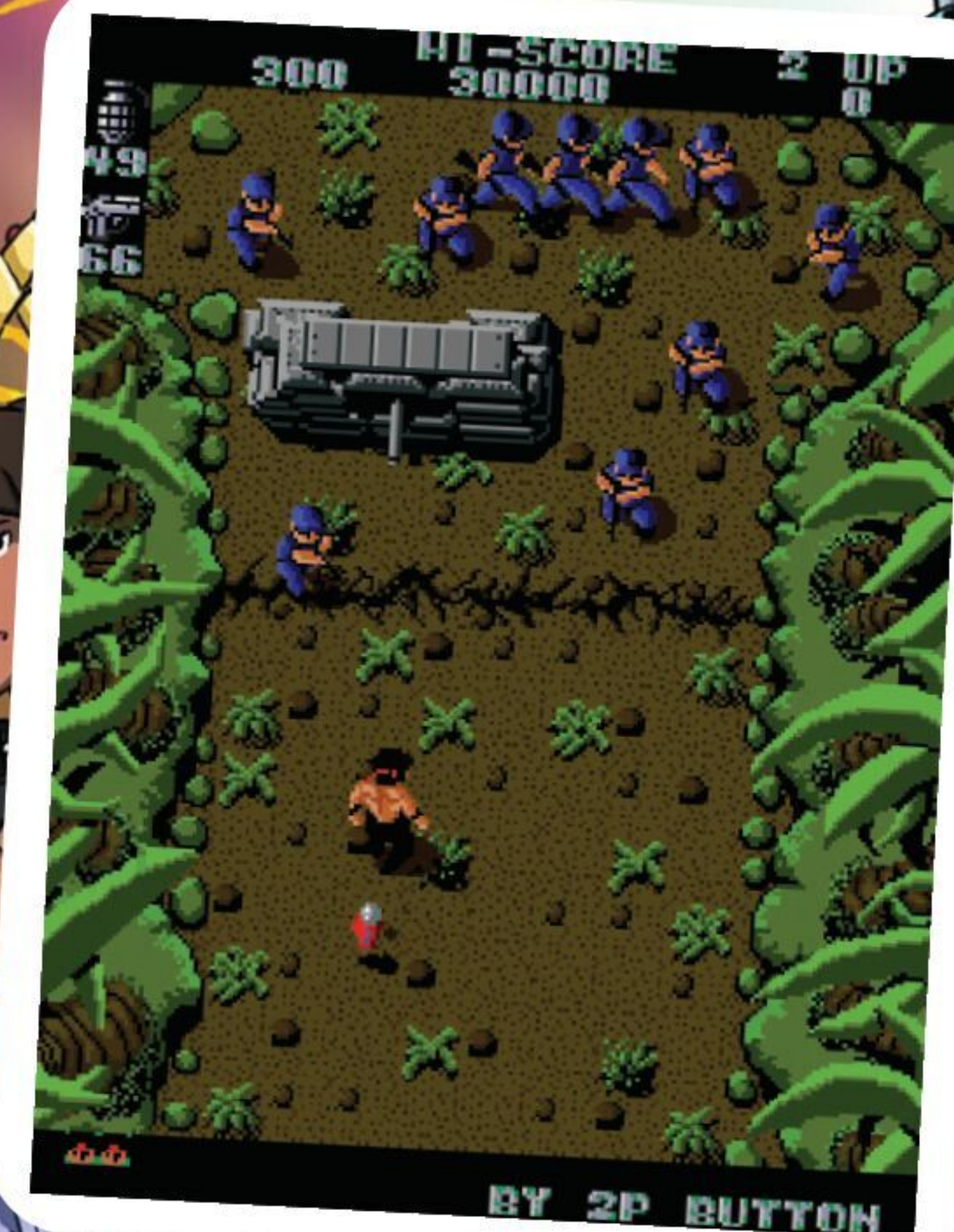
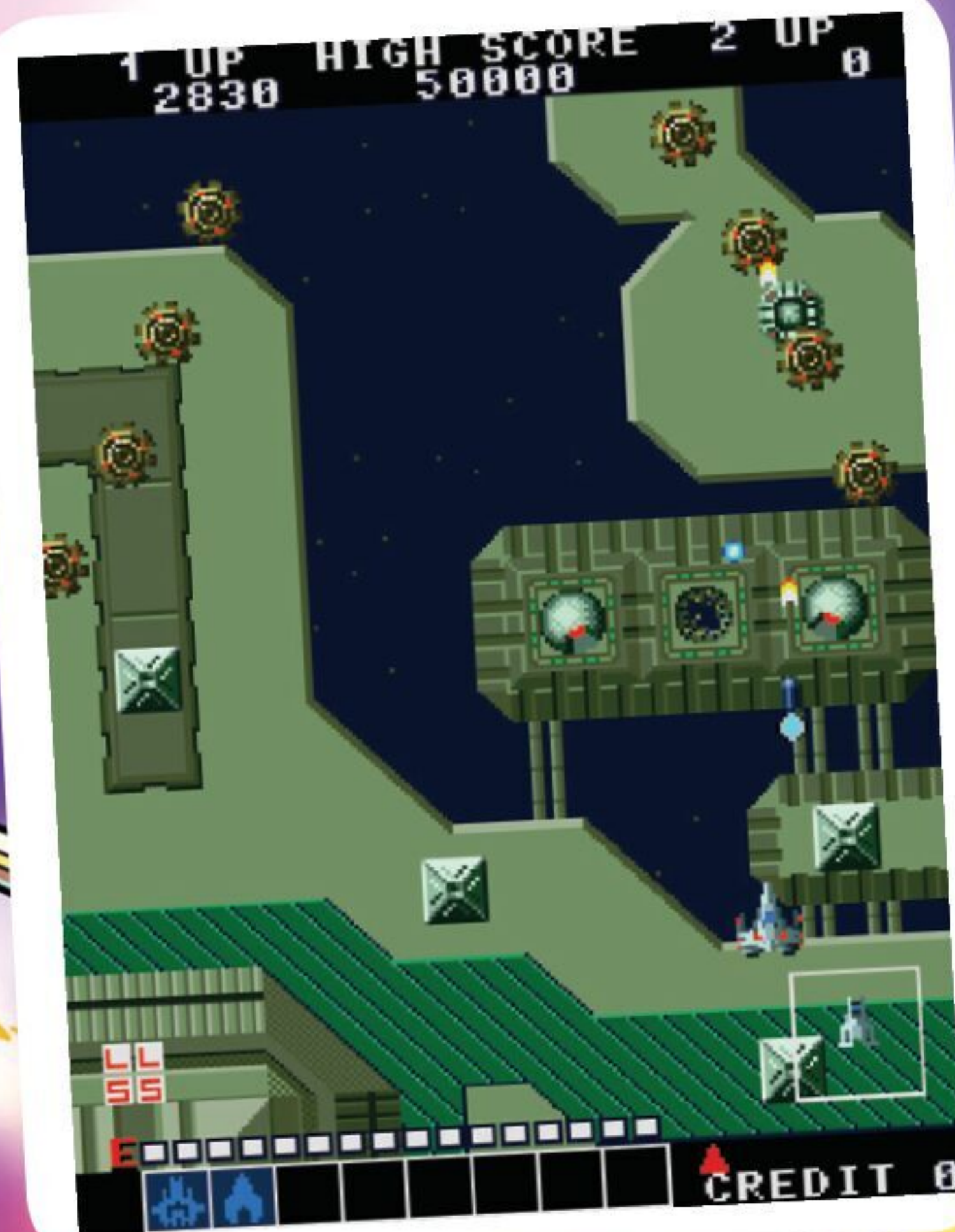
Scrolling shooters came a long way in a short time, and by 1985, SNK was becoming known as one of the classic genre's best publishers. *Alpha Mission* is a typically challenging 80s vertical shooter that is as unforgiving as it is rewarding. The collision detection is brutal but fair, and the screen quickly fills with bullets and enemies. The bosses are a little disappointing, but the excellent level design and varied selection of power-ups make up for this. *Alpha Mission* is also an early example of using 'satellites' that aid the player by shooting enemies and acting as a shield from incoming fire.

## IKARI WARRIORS

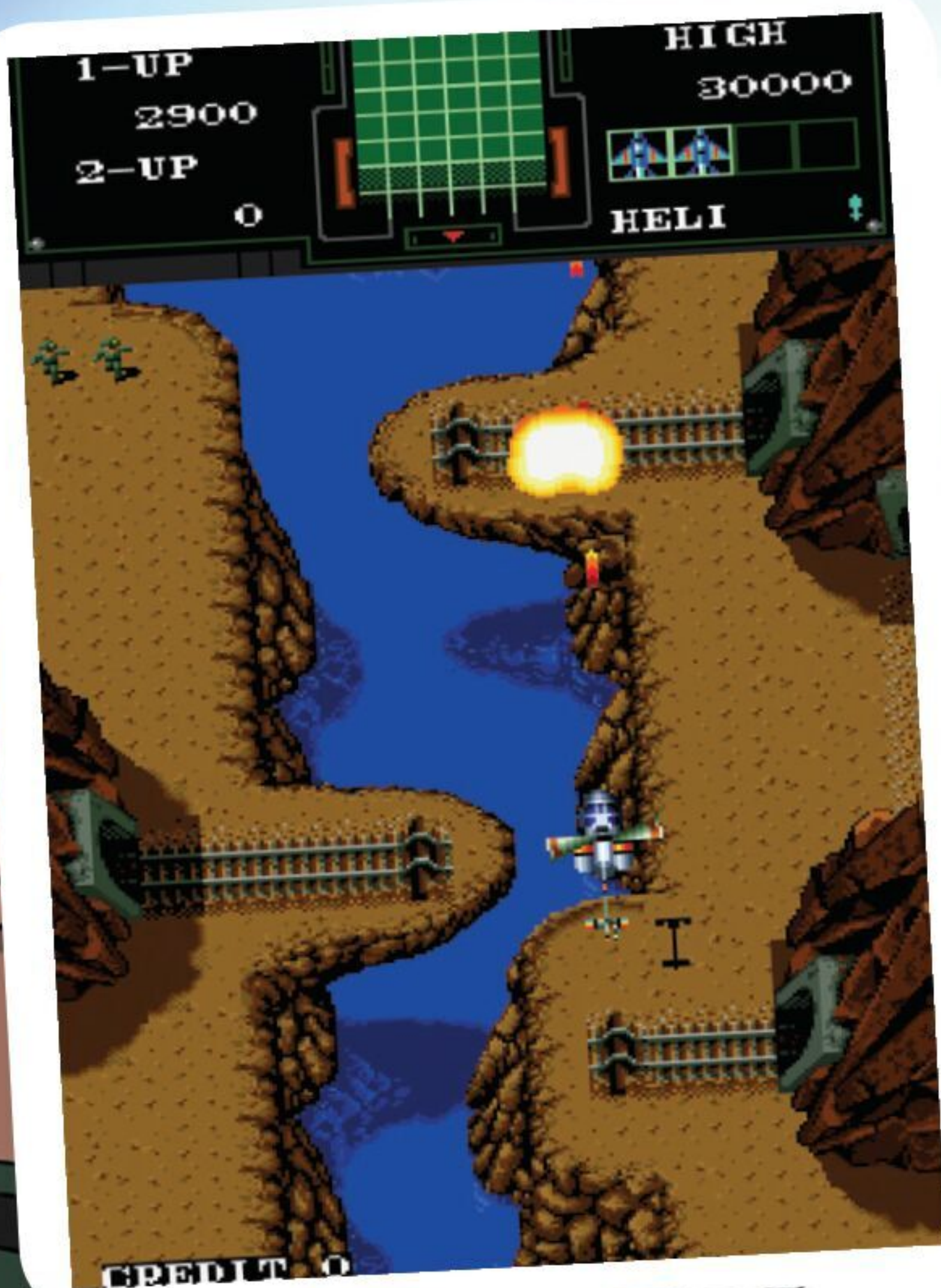
One of the better-known games in this collection, *Ikari Warriors*, is a fantastic vertical run 'n' gun that rose to success and spawned several sequels. SNK had initially bought the license to make a Rambo game but was forced to rebrand it before its release after the deal fell through. *Ikari Warriors* is an arcade classic that still plays wonderfully today, featuring intense bullet-hell action and detailed pixel art. This collection adds proper twin-stick controls that bring the gameplay to a new level. It may be rock hard to get through, but once you start to see more of the game, it's a joy to play.

## PSYCHO SOLDIER

After its first platform game, *Athena*, SNK continued the story with the loosely connected *Psycho Soldier*. You use psychic abilities to perform powerful attacks as you make your way through traditional platform levels. The screen constantly moves, so you are kept on your toes as wave after wave of enemies descends. It does become repetitive quickly, but the unique artwork and fantastic sound, which includes extended speech, are remarkable. *Psycho Soldier* shows off everything that made SNK arcade legends, and holds up well despite its simple gameplay.







## CHOPPER 1

**A**nother vertically-scrolling shooter from SNK, this 1988 release uses helicopters instead of the usual spaceships. You make your way up the screen, taking out turrets and other enemy aircraft. Power-ups include homing rockets and extra bullets, while your screen-clearing bombs get you out of a tough spot. *Chopper 1* may not be the most original game, but its tight controls and colourful artwork make it a joyful arcade experience. It gets tough in the later levels, and collision detection has a few issues. Overall, this classic shooter deserves to be on more gamers' radars.

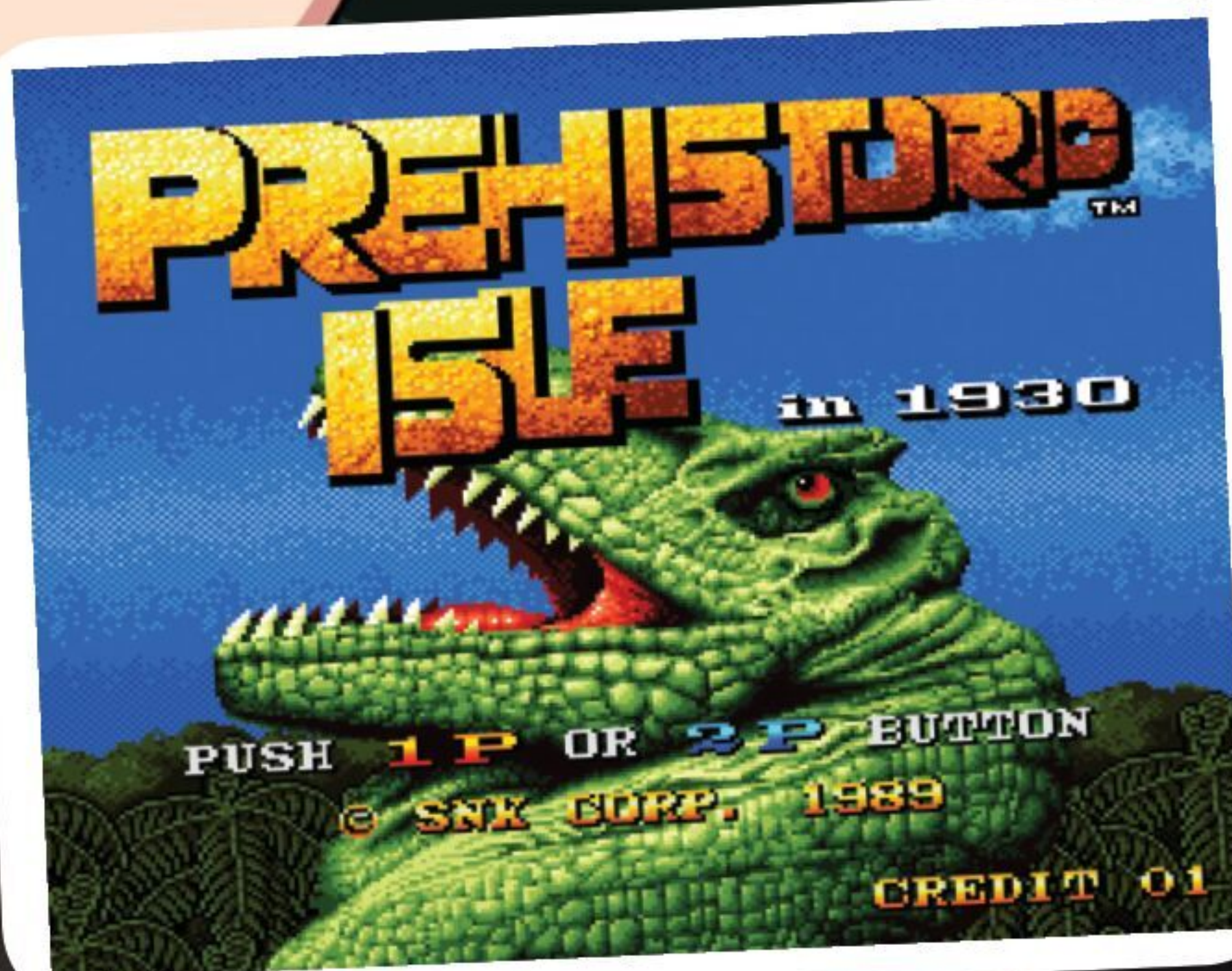
## P.O.W

**P**risoners of War is a traditional side-scrolling beat 'em-up spread across four stages as you attempt to escape a prison camp. Like all games of this type, you take on waves of enemies and confront a boss at the end of each stage. The combat, consisting of basic punch and kick, feels a little dated. However, the use of weapons mixes up the gameplay, and the sprites are impressively large. It's hard to stay alive as you can only take a few hits before dying, but skilled players will enjoy the challenge. *Prisoners of War* was quickly surpassed in the arcades by more impressive beat 'em-ups like *Final Fight*, but it has a charm and a quality that makes it still worth playing today.



## PREHISTORIC ISLE

**A**n interesting twist to SNK's usual blasters, *Prehistoric Isle* is a horizontal shooter set in the 1930s. It pays homage to classic old monster movies such as *King Kong* and *10,000 Years BC*. You pilot a classic biplane as you attempt to take down the dinosaurs and monsters wreaking havoc across the Bahamas. The controls feel loose in places, and the gameplay lacks the depth of other SNK shooters. But *Prehistoric Isle* is unique in its setting and design and is an excellent alternative to the spaceships and aliens that usually make up the enemies in these games.





## STREET SMART

This beat 'em-up takes a different path from the usual tropes of the genre. Instead of levels that you continually scroll through, each battle takes place in a fixed arena. You take on one fighter at a time in the form of a tournament similar to a one-on-one fighter. It's also has an early example of a combo system where you can string simple attacks together to deal more damage than a single hit. *Street Smart* is an interesting title more than it is a classic. Sadly, this genre mash-up does neither 1v1 fighting nor beat 'em-up particularly well.



## CRYSTALIS

By 1990, SNK had started spreading its wings to the console market. Following a few successful ports of its arcade games, it tackled a new genre in the form of *Crystalis*. This top-down action-adventure game is every bit a *Zelda* clone. The game setting is a mix between fantasy and sci-fi, similar to *Phantasy Star*. It follows the familiar story of an unknowing youngster coming of age. The combat plays out well, and there are some intriguing enemies to fight. Fans of the genre will find a quality game, although it does suffer from not being clear about what you need to do next.



Anyone who has not experienced these games before will have a blast discovering the history of one of the arcade's legends, while those who know SNK well will have a lovely batch of classics to continue that journey. Many games have a console port, so you can compare arcade and home versions via a slick menu system. Those that want an easy ride have a quick rewind function available, and all the games have high scores. Some games are surprisingly absent from this collection, but the variety on offer will keep everyone busy for a long time. This collection of games from SNK's glory days is well worth the price.





REVIEW OUT OF LINE XBOX, PS4, SWITCH, iPHONE, PC (REVIEWED)

**SIMON BUTLER  
EMBARKS ON A  
STRANGE JOURNEY  
WHERE EVERY  
ANSWER LEADS TO A  
BIGGER QUESTION**

# OUT OF LINE





■ As far as I can remember, my reviews in FUSION have been positive, with only one exception. *Out Of Line* is a strange game because I enjoyed my experience yet noticed flaws that, while not game-breaking, stood out for one reason or another.

Our hero is a small chap called San, who is attempting to escape the factory. Herein lies one of the first problems. We're not overly invested in the proceedings, with little more than that as our starting point. Everything in *Out Of Line* is executed adequately, and there is enjoyment to be had throughout, but during the two hours it takes to complete this game, you'll rarely give a damn about what's going on.

Moving from screen to screen, you are presented with puzzles to solve. There is a certain frisson in doing so, but other than that I wondered more than once what the hell was going on and why I wanted to continue further. Strangely enough, even without any answer to my questions, I did want to see what came next and find out, if possible, what all this was leading to. Nevertheless, enough of the browbeating; let's get back to the meat and potatoes of this affair.

As mentioned earlier, San is a diminutive type and can run and jump as one might



expect in a side-scrolling game. To aid in reaching greater heights, as well as interacting with switches and various objects encountered throughout his journey, he is carrying a rather spiffy yellow javelin that can be recalled after throwing it successfully or not. *Out Of Line* has a hint of *Abe's Odyssey* about it, but only a hint. After that, San is called upon to hit distant buttons with his javelin and activate platforms and mechanisms. This is handled very smoothly and becomes second nature when playing, but that's about it. Just when things start getting truly interesting, and some intriguing level design appears, it's all over, which confused me immensely.

The use of the javelin and subsequently extra time-dependent weapons was a nice mechanic, but it felt under-examined, and I felt it could have been developed further. Some of the animations were somewhat





lacking from my pedantic “pixel pusher” perspective, especially when I discovered that the team was not, as I initially suspected, new to game development. Despite having a decade of game creation under their belt, developer Nerd Monkeys has delivered a game where some things feel rushed and left wanting.

Visually, *Out Of Line* is a sumptuous product with hand-drawn graphics that look like chalk or coloured pastel. The world portrayed is another dystopian affair, with horrid tentacular beasties that have menacing claws and are the primary enemy throughout the game.

*Out Of Line* has only two boss “battles”, the first being more of a puzzle than a confrontation, hence the quotation marks. Naturally, one would expect the final conflict to result in some form of a denouement, but the actual ending left me doubly befuddled. I had completed a game that felt more like a proof of concept or a pitch. I had no real idea what the hell was going on or why I was moving San from point A to bewildering point B. However, I knew I had enjoyed the ride while it lasted, never mind that there had been some false stops and strange detours along the way. As I said at the beginning of this article - this is a strange little game.

All this being said, I can only repeat that I enjoyed the game while it lasted. If the earlier levels had been as interesting as those after the final battle, perhaps I would not have been such a negative Nelly.

*Out Of Line* is a title that has been on my Steam wish list for a long while, and as soon as I was informed of a 60% reduction in price, I pounced on it. I would have been harsher in my reflections here if I had purchased it at full price. As it stands, it’s a more than adequate little budget title and worth a couple of hours for those who like puzzle platformers. If the developer, Nerd Monkeys, is reading this in Portugal, I wish you well and hope that you take on board my humble observations.





# FUSION

Game : Kirby Battle Royale  
Year : 2017  
System : 3DS  
Words : Retro Faith

FAIL





■ *Kirby Battle Royale* is the kind of game that sounds great on paper but then fails to live up to its premise. The idea was to take the traditional *Kirby* gameplay and scale it up to crazy multiplayer battles. However, the *Kirby* mechanics were not implemented well, and the multiplayer aspect is stale and underwhelming. It was also meant to be a great online experience but players at the time complained about bugs in the lobbies and lag during battles.

The ten mini-games included lack any sense of variety, and you will lose interest after a few attempts. A couple of them aren't so bad, but most are just lacklustre, and the gameplay tropes feel tired. It would have worked better if the mini-games were wrapped around a *Mario Party* style board game. You could get some friends together and enjoy the hilarity as you jostle for positions, collecting Kirby powers on the boards that could be used in the mini-games.

It's not just the gameplay that suffers; the visuals and sound are awful, and it seems like a rush job from developer HAL Laboratories. *Kirby Battle Royale* is a wasted opportunity of a much-loved Nintendo franchise. The idea was a good one, and with a little more thought, it could have been an excellent alternative for those that love party games. But alas, Kirby will have to just suck this one up as a bad day out.





# AN AMERICAN GAMER IN ENGLAND



**"I'M AN ALIEN, I'M A LEGAL ALIEN, I'M A..." BEN MAGNET IS AN ALIEN WITH A POCKET FULL OF QUARTERS**

■ One of the best things to happen to me over the last two years is getting to know gamers from all corners of the globe. These gamers have not only become friends of mine, but a select few also became my colleagues in writing for this very magazine. One of the many joys of this newfound circle of

friends is discussing how video games and gaming differ in our respective countries. I live in the western United States (California, to be specific), and while experiences are similar to countries like England and Australia, it's always nice to get a new perspective on things and see how different things are in other parts of the world. I was able to get some of this perspective when I recently visited England.

This isn't the first time I've travelled overseas; I've been fortunate in my lifetime to visit continents like Asia and South America. However, I was young, and my video game experience in those regions was small to nonexistent. My biggest video game memory from visiting was when my younger brother and I convinced our parents to buy us a Game Boy Color while visiting Singapore; we thought the system was cheaper there than in the US. They relented and also bought us ROM hacked carts with multiple games, some in English and most in Japanese. When my family would take such vacations, the only video games we were allowed to bring were our handhelds. We went to these countries to experience the culture and the country, not to play games the whole time. My parents were right, and I've made many great



*Outside Four Quarters in Bristol*



memories over my travels.

When my friends planned a trip to France and England, I knew I had a golden opportunity to experience gaming across the Atlantic. Sadly fate would deal me a cruel hand, and I ended up missing out on France but was able to make it to England for a guided tour of Southern England and Cornwall. This turned out to be a boon but also a detriment because while I didn't have to worry about where we were going, we only had a short time in the places we visited, so exploring was limited. On my first night in the country, I was fortunate to be in a larger city that had an arcade to visit. The city was Bristol, and the arcade was Four Quarters.

I found Four Quarters arcade entirely by

accident. While on a tour of the city, our bus drove right past it and thanks to my eagle-eyed girlfriend, we were able to spot it, and I knew I had to go. The arcade wasn't too far from the hotel we were staying at, so we made the trip a bit later in the evening. I was a bit taken aback by the atmosphere when I first walked in. Right in front of the door was a *Ms. Pac-Man* machine and *Super Hang-On*, but I wasn't expecting a DJ and some patrons dancing in front of him. I saw the bar, some speciality drinks based on video game characters, more machines in the back, a high score board with patron's scores on specific cabinets, and a short staircase with 4 consoles plugged into CRT TVs. I wasn't just in an arcade but a true



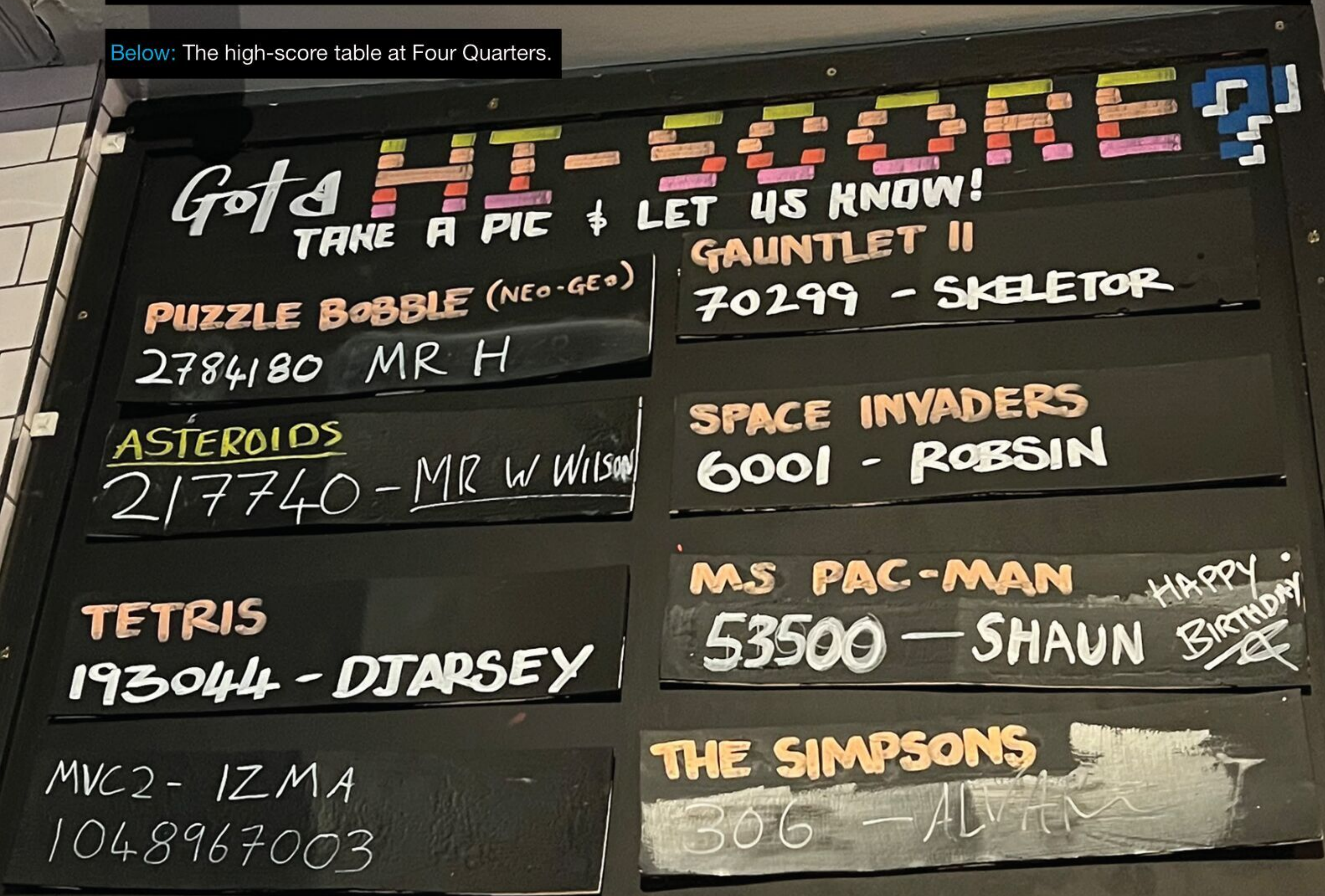
*Marvel Vs. Capcom 2 makes me happy!*



college town barcade on a Saturday night. While checking out the games, I also noticed something I wasn't expecting. All the arcade games took quarters, American quarters! My girlfriend and I started talking to this other couple who told us we could buy the quarters from the bar. They also found it funny that two Americans came to a barcade with no American quarters to spend. Now it makes sense; honestly, I should've seen it coming when I saw the arcade's name. With all the games being a quarter to play, I got some quarters and went straight to their *Marvel Vs.*

*Capcom II* cabinet. Their games were quite varied, and even though the space was small, they still had a decent selection of games. They had some light gun games, *Crazy Taxi*, *The Simpsons*, and I even found out that in England, the official name for the Ninja Turtles was *Teenage Mutant HERO Turtles*. [The word 'ninja' was deemed too violent for the poor kiddies of the UK in the early 90s - Ed]. Downstairs, the consoles they had were the SNES, Mega Drive, GameCube, and N64, all with multiplayer games plugged in. The whole place was somewhere I could easily spend hours just playing

Below: The high-score table at Four Quarters.



games and having some good drinks, but we didn't stay long. Being on a tour meant we had to be up at 8am the next day, but Four Quarters is somewhere I want to go back to should I find myself in Bristol ever again.

While I did find a great barcade to go back to, shopping-wise, I wasn't so lucky. There were a few game shops in Bristol, but I got lost trying to find some and for the rest of the trip, there weren't any game stores around me save

for one; a little shop in St. Ives called Space Oddity. It was a small shop that had games and other forms of pop culture collectables: records, CDs, Pop vinyls, and plenty of Star Wars toys. The selection of video games was small but decent. I was able to walk away with two GBA games, thanks to the system not being region locked. What also got me is that you never honestly know what you'll find when you walk into a game store. This



one had a copy of *Xenosaga II*, but it was the North American version. The shopkeep made sure that whoever wanted to buy it knew they needed an NTSC (or North American) PS2 to play it properly, and now this store has my respect. I've been to many a market with video game sellers, and 9 times out of 10, all the seller wants is my hard-earned money. They could sell me a repro or a region-locked game, and I wouldn't know until it was too late. Thankfully this one was kind enough to let the future buyer know. I almost bought it, but sadly the game was a bit too expensive for me.

While in England, the thing that kept going through my mind was, "I need to come back." Not just so I could see more of the country, but so I could experience more of the

gaming culture. Don't get me wrong, exploring Southern England was an absolute treat. You could feel the history in the towns and villages; walking through castles and abbeys that have been standing longer than my own country was in existence was surreal. While visiting these grand locations, my girlfriend and I did make PLENTY of video game jokes. Nearly every castle or church we visited, she would whisper, "*Elden Ring*" in my ear. I definitely did the pose in front of Dunster and Tintagel castles. It was a trip unlike any other I have been on, and next time while I will certainly take in more of the sights, I'll also be going to a pub with an arcade, getting a pint, and trying my best to set the high score on a machine I love.



Rise, tarnished, and become an Elden Lord in the Lands Between (England, UK)



SCORE 1000

TIME 1:50

RINGS 30



*THAT MOMENT  
WHEN...*



SONIC  
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